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OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

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VS

SOCOM II

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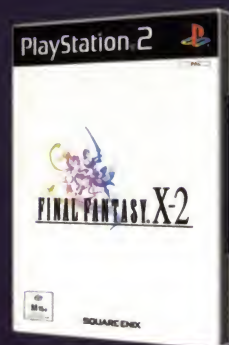
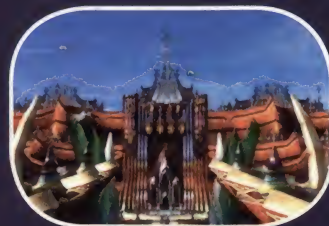
DERWENT HOWARD

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contents

ISSUE 25 MARCH 2004

50

Get down and dirty with the Navy Seals in our *SOCOM II* review!



54



**TOM CLANCY'S
RAINBOW SIX 3**

58



TAK & THE POWER OF JUJU

60



SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON

62



**SPHINX AND THE
CURSED MUMMY**

PREVIEWS

- 20 JUICED**
The racer that leaves *Need for Speed* choking on its smoke
- 22 RISE TO HONOR**
Rising Hollywood star Jet Li lends his likeness and his fists to this impressive new brawler.
- 24 STARCRAFT: GHOST**
Flick to our exclusive hands-on look at the biggest surprise of 2004. You need this game!
- 26 CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH**
The unofficial *Baldur's Gate* sequel is looking like the 2004 co-op game to beat.

REGULARS

- 06 EDITOR'S LETTER**
The lowdown on what's been happening at *OPS2* this month
- 08 ON THE DVD**
Take a look at what's on this month's cover disc
- 10 LOADING...**
Exclusive info on *Red Ninja*, *Silent Hill 4* and loads more
- 78 DVD REVIEWS**
We review *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and more
- 80 FEEDBACK**
Your questions answered and your suck-ups printed!
- 82 SUBSCRIPTIONS**
Save money and go into the draw to win a DVD recorder
- 86 RE-BOOT**
This month we have guides for *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun*, *Need for Speed Underground* and more
- 94 GAME STATION**
Check out *OPS2*'s ongoing efforts to help you organise your PS2 collection. Don't go near a games shop without it!
- 98 NEXT ISSUE**
Throw away that crystal ball – we tell you what's coming in the future

FEATURES

- 34 SPLINTER CELL 2**
Sam Fisher has strapped the cammo gear back on for his toughest mission yet! Sneak over to our exclusive preview.
- 38 RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK**
It's *Res Evil* with a big shot of adrenalin!
- 42 SINGSTAR**
Fancy having a karaoke-off with your friends? Expect that and more with this innovative new title from Sony.
- 46 V8 SUPERCARS 2**
The kings of Aussie grunt roll back onto the track for this monster sequel!

REVIEWS

- 050 SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS**
- 054 TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3**
- 058 TAK & THE POWER OF JUJU**
- 060 SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON**
- 062 SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY**
- 064 DOWNHILL DOMINATION**
- 065 GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM**
- 066 MAFIA**
- 068 ROGUE OPS**
- 070 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA**
- 072 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**
- 074 MIDWAY'S ARCADE CLASSICS**
- 074 FLIPNIC**
- 076 NFL STREET**
- 076 NBA LIVE 2004**

64



DOWNHILL DOMINATION

65



GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

66



MAFIA

68



ROGUE OPS



PlayStation®2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

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WRITE TO

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**"SOCOM II
and Rainbow
Six 3 are
unbelievably
sophisticated."**

EDITOR'S LETTER



It wasn't so long ago that tactical shooters were dodgy old games that noone really played – let alone noticed. They didn't get a lot of attention, mainly because they suffered from poor gameplay, worse graphics and their plots seemed to be based on something written by a five-year old. It's something we're happy to report then, that both *SOCOM II* and *Rainbow Six 3* are unbelievably sophisticated.

As competition heats up to dominate each and every genre in the twisted world of videogames, it's tactical shooters like these that are showing the most immediate and impressive leap. The teams at Zipper (*SOCOM II*) and Ubisoft (*Rainbow Six 3*) have really stepped it up. Just like Hollywood started to nail authenticity in big-budget movies from the '80s, these companies are starting to do thorough, in-depth research and consult top professionals and leaders of industry – just so that you get the most realistic experience possible when you play their games.

Now, when you boot up either of these games you can be happy knowing that everything about them is based on official information. Plots aside, you can see how real SEALs for example, communicate, move and react to one another in any given situation. You'll also have access to the same types of weapons and equipment that they would use to complete missions in realistically modelled environments. And as we *always* claim in this magazine, it's only set to get even better in the future!

Without doubt, both of these games ooze quality and they are form part of an ever-deepening pool for the tactical shooter genre. That's why we've pitted the two against one another to see which game is strongest in each and every department. Just as they've pitted the games together in intricate detail, we've pulled them apart again to find out who really is the best of the best.

Res Ipsa loquitor!

Richie Young

RICHIE YOUNG
Editor

* Let the good times roll

WHO'S PULLING THE TRIGGER



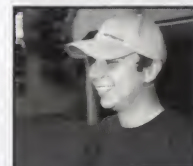
NARAYAN PATTISON

Despite suffering from a case of jetlag that made his Xmas party hangover look mild, Naz wrote his exclusive *Starcraft* feature and still had time to beat the *Beer Tapper* high score.



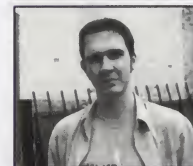
TRISTAN OGILVIE

After sharing his comic genius with *OPS2* for the last four months, Tristan is making the jump to au.playstation.com – so head over to the forums and say "G'day".



MICHAEL DEVRIES

OPS2's party animal turned into the ladies man at Tristan's farewell drinks – we lost count after 23! Tom Cruise is in negotiations to star in the movie based on Michael's efforts.



LUKE REILLY

You might have heard about the "gas leak" that shut Sydney trains down for an afternoon in February. It was actually a fight between Luke and 47 Xbox fans.



MICHELLE STARR

We almost had to fire Michelle when she told us she'd bought an Xbox for her boyfriend. Luckily she was only kidding – it was a second PS2 for her spare room. Now that's hardcore.



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

When Anthony's not churning through all the games we send his way, he's cultivating his facial hair one by one. Yep, big Anthony has admitted to having "a thing" for *OPS2*'s own Michelle ...



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on the dvd

PLAYABLE DEMOS

MAXIMO VS THE ARMY OF ZIN



PUBLISHER: **THQ**
GAME TYPE: **PLATFORMER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**

BUST OUT OF THE GRAVEYARD and swing your sword at a new variety of robotic enemies powered by human souls – this time with the Grim Reaper on your side – in the sequel to the excellent *Maximo*. This demo gives you a chance to check out the fast-paced platforming, dashing, hacking and slashing that makes up Maximo's battle against the evil clockwork Army Of Zin. Collect enough coins and you'll be able to splurge on armour and tankards from one of the local merchants. Up for a challenge? Try to save all the townsfolk and collect all the items to get a 100% rating for the level. Go on, we dare you ...



SSX3



PUBLISHER: **EA**
GAME TYPE: **SNOWBOARDING**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
(FULL GAME 1-2)

THE SSX SERIES RETURNS, and this third instalment provides more exotic riding positions and acrobatic moves than a Paris Hilton home movie. We've slapped a Kosciusko-sized slab of snowboarding enjoyment on this month's disc. Right from the heli-drop the action is hotter than a Jindabyne nightclub on a cold night, and you'll be unleashing the Uber-tricks in no time.



CASTLEVANIA



PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
GAME TYPE: **ACTION/ADVENTURE**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**

THOSE CRAZY BELMONTS RETURN IN 3D, and this time it's Leon's turn to battle the undead hordes and crack the whip at various fish men, skeleton soldiers and bloodthirsty goblins. Don't forget to seek out all the neat power-ups that are hidden around the castle, and use your special attacks and combo moves to give those vampire blokes the damn good thrashing that all *Buffy* fans know they deserve.



I-NINJA



PUBLISHER: **SONY**
GAME TYPE: **PLATFORMER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**

IT'S A GOOD TIME TO BE A TINY NINJA WITH A BULBOUS HEAD. Though he may look like an orange on a toothpick, *I-Ninja* is a force to be reckoned with – channelling his rage into an array of powerful attacks and stylish moves. Kicking ass isn't the only fun here – *Super Monkey Ball*-style puzzling is also the order of the day.



WORMS 3D



PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GAME TYPE: **STRATEGY**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
(FULL GAME 1-4)

WANT TO EXPERIENCE WORMS but you're not prepared to let your dog lick your face? Don't worry, you can sample one of the funniest PS2 games in recent times thanks to our two-player demo – and you won't need any soothing creams afterwards. Expect homing pigeons, bouncing banana bombs, exploding sheep and more!



Ah, the first month of Autumn. The trees are turning brown, the supermarkets aisles are filling up with Easter Eggs and the footy season is just about to get into full swing. But you'll barely even notice thanks to the massive distraction that this month's demo disc is set to provide you with. Haven't yet managed to hit the slopes in *SSX3*? Get to it. Thinking about donning the blue pyjamas and kung-fu kicking some bobble-headed foes in *I-Ninja*? What are you waiting for? We've also included our own save game for *Jak II: Renegade*, so you can warp straight to the end and skip all those controller-smashing tricky bits. Take the phone off the hook and get your secretary to cancel all your appointments, this one's going to take a while ...

Tristan Ogilvie

TRISTAN OGILVIE
Staff Writer

PS To use this DVD, load it up on your PS2. Then scroll between games and rolling demos with the \downarrow and \uparrow keys. To choose within a section use \leftarrow and \rightarrow . Press \otimes to start up your choice. Please note, you may have to reset your PS2 after some demos.

YOUR DISC

Every issue, *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine* brings you something no other magazine can – playable demos. Offering exclusive levels, tracks and missions, our playable DVD enables you try the very latest PS2 games before you buy, often weeks, even months before release. Why risk your hard-earned cash on a \$100 game when you can try it out on our cover-mounted DVD? From *GT3* and *MGS2* to *TimeSplitters 2* and *Final Fantasy X*, we've always featured playable demos of the games that matter. Throw in top quality video footage of the hits of the future and our DVD is the best bargain on the newsagent's shelves.

DISC PROBLEMS?

If your disc isn't working properly, simply send it back to this address for a replacement.
Demo Disc Returns
Official PlayStation 2 Magazine
P.O. Box 1037 Bondi Junction,
NSW, 1355



ARC: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

IT'S STYLISH, IT'S

INNOVATIVE, and it's brilliant fun to play. We've managed to snag the first level of Arc: *Twilight of the Spirits* in its entirety for you to try. All you have to do is exit the hut at the beginning and make your way down the wooden walkways to the truck parked on the beach. It's as simple as that ... Or is it?



PUBLISHER: **SONY**
GAME TYPE: **RPG**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**



FORD RACING 2

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU'RE A HOLDEN OR A FORD MAN, you're bound to have a blast in the tricky off-road and speedy concept car races. Sadly, Harrison "Han Solo" Ford is notably absent. Ah well, maybe in *Ford Racing 3* then ...



PUBLISHER: **RED ANT**
GAME TYPE: **RACING**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-2**



METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM

ROBOTS KILLING ROBOTS -

It's fun for the whole family because no one really gets hurt due to the lack of actual nervous systems. In our demo you need to help Glitch overcome the evil mining robots - just don't forget to stock up on items at the shop.

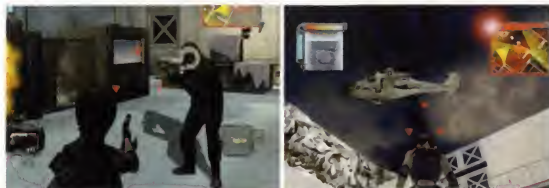


PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI**
GAME TYPE: **SHOOTER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**



ROGUE OPS

SHE'S GOT A MORE ATTAINABLE FIGURE THAN LARA, and more infiltration skills than Sam and Snake put together. Her name's Nikki Connors, and she's the newest minx on the stealth-'em-up block. Take her for a stealthy spin in our exclusive demo.



PUBLISHER: **THQ**
GAME TYPE: **STEALTH SHOOTER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**

REEL FOOTAGE

Do you like to watch? Indulge your inner-voyeur with this collection of videos

ALIAS

Jennifer Garner - bark! Woof! A-rooooo! Pant! Er, yes, it's that high-kicking secret agent starring in her first game based on the popular TV series. Feel free to replay it.

KILLSWITCH

It's been a fixture in the OPS2 games room since it arrived in the office a few months ago. Is it the ridiculously cool no-look shooting or the way the enemies hysterically freak out when you lob a grenade their way? We think it's a bit of both ...

NBA JAM 2004

Ah, the classic baller returns. If the OPS2 staff hadn't spent so much money on the original in the arcades we'd probably be rich men today. Or at least have better shoes.

FORBIDDEN SIREN

The music is haunting, the character's faces are disturbingly realistic. This one scares us more than waking up with our hair cut like Dicko's from *Australian Idol*. Shudder ...

RISE TO HONOUR

A neat little behind-the-scenes featurette where Jet Li demonstrates exactly how he could kick anyone's ass. We certainly wouldn't tease him about his appearance in that motion capture suit ...

SWAT

Get an insight to what it's like to be Collin Farrell - minus the drunken nights and armloads of beautiful women.

WRC3

If you missed last month's playable demo then we're afraid you'll just have to sit back and watch. Just not too closely - you don't want to get splattered by the mud.

HULK

You've seen the film, maybe you've even bought a pair of those big green fists that go "Grrraaah!". Now it's time to check out the game in all its cel-shaded glory.

PREVIEW
ON
P22!

DOWNLOADER

Not quite up to scratch? Let us share your load by doing the hard yards for you. To access the saves below just pop your memory card into your PS2 and scroll through the disc menus until you reach the Downloads section. Now highlight the save you want and press (X). Too easy!

JAK II: RENEGADE

Unlike *Speed 2*, or perhaps *Rocky V*, here's a sequel that is actually vastly superior to the original. Without a doubt it's easily much more open-ended and provides a tougher challenge. So much so that many of you might have given up already, but fear not because OPS2 has persevered and battled our way to the end of this classic platformer. Jak and his shoulder-warming friend are right in the middle of Haven City, with the majority of the missions completed. He's nicely equipped, but you're going to have to explore a bit if you want to find the thread of the plot.

CHAOS LEGION

It's quite hard work getting the biggest legion of them all back in action. We unlock the big fella and the rest of the game too.

THE MARK OF KRI

If you can't walk the walk and can't stalk the stalk then you're probably in need of a bit of help. Tuck in to our satisfying save packed with cartoony Polynesian pummeling.

FORD RACING 2

Up for some special challenges from the development team itself? Download 'em and get cracking!

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Are you fed up of being rubbish at *Wolfenstein* and not being able to get past the WWII stuff? Want to get straight to the exciting-looking undead skull-cracking? No problem - this save will get you there, no skill required!

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

Feel free to use our giant leap into this excellent French sci-fi fantasy. Just be sure that you've got film in the camera.

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

It's getting a bit old now - but it's still a goodie. Get into the mood for the soon-to-be-released *Everything or Nothing* by limbering up on these unlocked missions.



loading...

EDITED BY NARAYAN PATTISON

INFO NUDGE

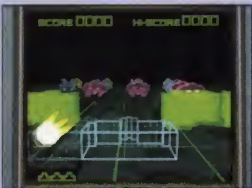
SEVEN SAMURAI COLLIDE

Fancy some furiously fast melee-style combat? Want it draped in the visual style of the legendary Moebius (of *Allen* and *The Fifth Element* fame) and set to the score of Academy Award winning composer Ryuichi Sakamoto? Then you'll probably be keen to pick up *Seven Samurai 20XX*, the forthcoming action game from Sammy Studios based on the legendary Japanese film that inspired the classic Steve McQueen western, *The Magnificent Seven*. Aside from the usual action-a-plenty, the developer also promises that there will be a deep storyline and plenty of character development in when *Seven Samurai* ships.



RAGE AGAINST THE NANOMACHINE

Koji Igarashi, the legendary developer of the *Castlevania* series, is creating a brand new action adventure game titled *Nanobreaker*. Along the lines of *Devil May Cry*, *Nanobreaker* is a futuristic fast-paced 3D slash-'em-up in which the main character wields a shape-shifting Plasma Blade in order to carve his way through an army of evil nanomachines. Apparently there'll be plenty of combos to pull off for the experienced player, but we won't know for sure until the game is released in Spring 2004.



INVADING NEW SPACE

While *Space Invaders* may sound as archaic as black and white television and Ancient Greece to many of our younger readers, there's no doubt that it had a huge impact and influence on the videogame industry. Those of you who have a hankering for some sweet, sweet nostalgia, perhaps brought on by our recent Retro Ad-dict feature, should be excited to learn that 2004 is the 25th anniversary of the original *Space Invaders*. To celebrate, developer Empire is packaging nine different versions of the classic shooter onto one shiny PS2 disc, including a *Space Invaders* 3D mode, a *Space Invaders Versus* mode and all of the different tabletop arcade versions we've come to know and love.



"Come on, let's see you criticise my crappy acting in xXx now, Punk!"

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

LA STORY

OPS2 travelled to LA for a sneak peak at Vivendi's 2004 games!



Van Helsing proves that lightning strikes more than twice.

EVEN THOUGH WE KNOW WE'VE GOT TO TURN AROUND AND DO IT AGAIN in a couple of months for E3, the tireless *OPS2* team jumped at the chance to jet off to sunny LA for an exclusive look at Vivendi's biggest 2004 releases. Being based in LA it wasn't a big surprise to find that Hollywood movies featured heavily in the line-up, with adaptations of *Van Helsing*, *Predator*, *Fight Club* and a *Pitch Black* prequel (called *Riddick*) all in development.

Vivendi wasn't able to let us play *Fight Club* or *Predator* just yet but the upcoming monster flick *Van Helsing* was looking mighty fine. Providing you can get past Hugh Jackman's sissy boy haircut, the game offers up a monster slice of *Devil May Cry*-style third-person blasting action, with plenty of meaty weapons and a cool grappling hook that can be used to reel enemies in for some close encounters of the 'stick a shotgun in

your chest and make a big hole' kind.

Riddick is a stunning sci-fi shooter based around Vin Diesel's character from *Pitch Black*. The game details Riddick's escape from the maximum security prison that led to him being in custody at the beginning of *Pitch Black*. Unfortunately, Vivendi currently only has plans to produce the game on Xbox. Start sending those big piles of angry letters Vivendi's way now and we should be able to get some Diesel power on PS2 this Christmas. To tide us over until then, we do have the mid-year release of *The Chronicles of Riddick* – a full-blown movie sequel to *Pitch Black* that sees our cousin Vinny stuck right in the middle of an interplanetary war. We also got our grubby mitts on playable versions *Red Ninja* and *Starcraft: Ghost*, but you'll have to turn to pages 12 and 24 respectively for our hands-on verdicts of them. **LB**

STOP THE PRESSES

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

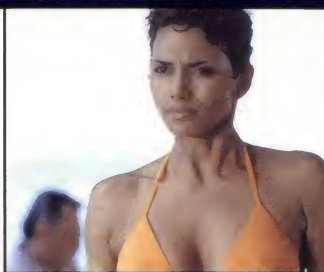
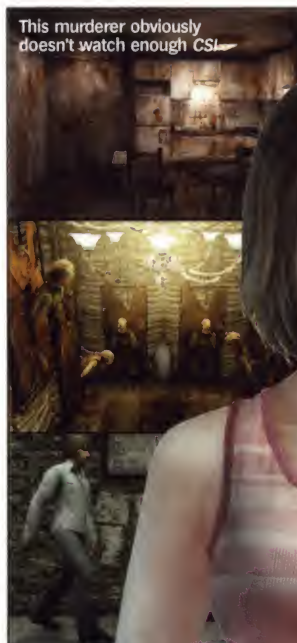
There's room for another Silent Hill ...

WHILE THE TITLE MIGHT NOT EXACTLY HAVE YOU BITING OFF YOUR OWN FINGERNAILS, the gameplay of *Silent Hill 4: The Room* looks set to provide the most spine-tingling, gut-churning, groin-tightening dose of thrilling hardcore scariness yet. The room in question is a cursed apartment belonging to main character Henry Townshend, which contains mysterious portals that lead to disturbing alternate worlds.

The apartment acts as a hub for each location throughout the game, but as you progress through it the alternate

worlds slowly seep into the real world and the apartment slowly transforms.

Here at OPS2 we happen to think that when it comes to creating pure unadulterated terror in videogames nothing really comes close to the *Silent Hill* series, and in the fourth instalment you'll be able to gain a new perspective on the action. For the first time events in game will unfold from both third and first-person views and the latter of the two should take the impact of the hauntingly dark environments and twisted macabre creatures up another chilling notch. ♣



MOVIE MURMURS

The latest news and rumours in the world of film and DVD

● **SPECULATION CONTINUES TO BUILD** for the casting of the next *Batman* film, a series prequel presently dubbed *Batman: Intimidation*. Apparently Australia's own Guy Pearce is in talks to play the role of a young Harvey Dent (who goes on to be the villain Two-Face), and Morgan Freeman is the top choice to play the role of Commissioner Jim Gordon. But who will play the caped crusader?

● **THE JAMES BOND SPIN-OFF FILM JINX**, which was to focus on Halle Berry's CIA character from *Die Another Day* has been cancelled. Apparently movie studio MGM wanted to instead focus on the next *Bond* film set to start production in 2005. No sign of Hugh Jackman slipping into a dry martini as the suave superspy just yet though.

FIRST LOOK

GUARANTEED HIT

Everyone's favourite assassin is back in Hitman: Contracts

BEING A KILLER FOR HIRE and focusing on the most efficient ways to rub targets out is far from the most politically correct concept for a videogame, but is sure is an entertaining one. *Hitman 2*'s dark atmosphere and realistic objectives made it one of the most compelling games of 2002, and even though details on *Hitman: Contracts* are thinner than Agent 47's hair, we're already as excited as Big Kev at a Nymphomaniac Supermodels Who Prefer Large Men convention.

Kicking off in Paris, Agent 47 finds himself wounded and trapped by unknown foes, but we're confident his mad McGyver skills will see him busting out of there faster than an Xbox fan can cry "I'm a little bitch!" To help Agent 47 unleash the beast on his enemies, he'll be getting to grips with a variety of new killing techniques, melee weapons and superior firepower. Jesper Kyd, the award-winning composer behind the *Hitman 2* and *Freedom Fighters* soundtracks has already signed on for the sequel.

Eidos is confident *Hitman: Contracts* will be ready for a mid-2004 release.

Expect to see a lot more on this game in coming Issues, but for those who just can't wait, why not head over to www.hitmancontracts.com to download the game's spanking new trailer. ♣



● **CAN IT BE TRUE?** Rumours suggest that the original *Star Wars* trilogy will see a DVD release this September. Series creator George Lucas had originally stated that we wouldn't see Episodes IV, V and VI on DVD until after the third and final prequel is finished, but things could be running ahead of schedule.

● **THE FAT ALBERT LIVE ACTION FILM IS GOING AHEAD** with *Saturday Night Live*'s Kenan Thompson donning the oversized trousers. The film will also be co-written by Bill Cosby.

● **WRITER FRANK DARABONT** has cracked the whip and turned over his finished script for *Indiana Jones IV*. With Harrison Ford not getting any younger, the story apparently takes place a decade or two after *The Last Crusade*.

● **AFTER NEARLY A YEAR OF NEGOTIATIONS**, Pixar Animation Studios has ended its lucrative relationship with Disney and will begin talks with other studios to distribute its films beginning 2006. Pixar's final films with Disney will be *The Incredibles*, due this November and *Cars*, due in mid-2005.

WANT MORE?
Turn to page 78 for our monthly DVD round up



THE REAL VICE CITY

Dutch games publisher Davilex Games has announced that it is presently creating a new game based on the gaudy '80s television show, *Miami Vice*. Aside from single-handedly creating the sports jacket and t-shirt fashion trend, *Miami Vice* also had a healthy influence on Rockstar's *Vice City*. So it's no real surprise that the new game will be a third-person game with a sprawling city to explore, dramatic shootouts and numerous missions to complete. Sounds quite familiar, and we can't help but feel that this game will be a bit too much Don Johnson 2004 and not enough Don Johnson 1984.



WORSE THAN EURO DISNEYLAND

Disneyland's popular attraction, The Haunted Mansion, is being converted into a feature film starring Eddie Murphy, whose career has already crossed over into the afterlife, along with a new game from Take 2 Interactive. Apparently there will be 999 different spooks to catch. We're not sure why they haven't just gone for an even 1000, but at any rate it should offer some harmless thrills for the younger gamers not yet old enough for serious stuff like *Silent Hill* or *Resident Evil*. Aside from controlling mild mannered ghost hunter Zeke Halloway, the developers are also hinting that we'll be able to take control of one of the ghosts too. Here's hoping it's more Slimmer than Casper ...



**CIRCLE
STUDIO**

NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER

Like her or not you can't say that Lara Croft hasn't played a big part in bringing the videogame medium into the mainstream. Thus the iconic character's creators Jeremy Heath-Smith and Adrian Smith should be applauded for their contribution to our beloved industry. The two Smiths recently started up a new development team, Circle Studio, and are presently hard at work on what they hope will be a series of new world-beating titles. 35 of their former workmates from Core have also been recruited, and plans are already underway to develop titles for the PlayStation 3.

loading...

THE WILD WEST

DEMONS UNDER SIEGE

Third Onimusha receives a makeover for Aussies

IT'S ALREADY OUT IN JAPAN, but by the time it gets to our shores *Onimusha 3* will be a slightly improved action epic. Already touted as one of the best looking PS2 games ever, the game will be retitled *Onimusha 3: Demon Siege*, have slight alterations to the camera angles, exclusive enemies, more gore and an increased difficulty level by the time it's released later this year.

For those who aren't in the loop, *Onimusha 3* will feature full polygonal backgrounds for the first time in the series in an effort to fully realise the title's truly dramatic camerawork. The battle scenes will feature even more sword slashing than

before, and you'll be able to indulge in it with two playable characters this time, each with different fighting styles.

EA has already done it a few times in their recent *Bond* titles, and Capcom is following its lead by featuring a real Hollywood actor in *Onimusha 3*, Frenchman Jean Reno. Reno lends his voice and likeness to the playable character Jacques Blanc, who is transported back from 2004 to feudal Japan. Meanwhile the mighty warrior Samanosuke finds himself teleported from 1582 to modern day Paris. No word as to if there'll be a DeLorean and a hoverboard, but we'll keep you posted. **B**



This wasn't the sort of threesome I had in mind



Playing Eye Toy with swords is a no-no kids

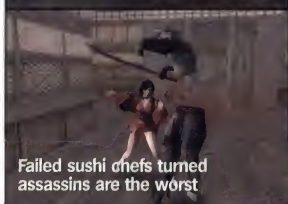
HACK JOB

BIRD ON A WIRE

She's Shinobi's angry sister, Red Ninja!



She looks wired for sound



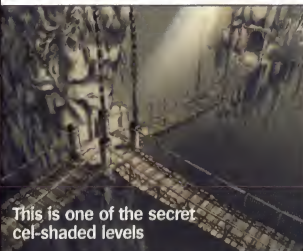
Failed sushi chefs turned assassins are the worst

THE SASSY STAR OF RED NINJA

NINJA is a young girl who was left for dead by a rival ninja clan, who then spent her life training to become the ultimate killer. This makes her harder than Superman that time he 'accidentally' walked in on Wonder Woman in the shower.

Her specialty is a razor sharp wire that can be wrapped around enemies in a flash, severing body parts with ease.

She can also attach blunt instruments to the end of the wire to beat seven shades of red out of her foes. If she's feeling especially nasty she can slap a hook on the wire, allowing her to sink one end into an enemy and run around in a circle, holding the other end and turning any poor sod in between into salami. Five minutes with this game and you'll never look at a bundle of wire without shuddering. **B**



This is one of the secret cel-shaded levels



THE TOP TEN

GAME CHARACTERS TO INVITE TO YOUR PARTY

1. CANDY SUXXX (GTA: VICE CITY)

If you need this one spelled out then you're definitely not old enough to come to the party.

2. PRINCE OF PERSIA (POP)

This guy's a must-have. You can use his time-reversing dagger to keep trying different pick-up lines until you finally hit the jackpot with a classy one like "Do you know what would look good on you? Me."

3. PAMELA ANDERSON (VLP)

Her game may have been a stinking dog but if it wasn't for Pammy busting through the boundaries of artificial enhancement we might all be stuck playing our videogames in a flat-chested wasteland. And if that's not worth buying her a drink, we don't know what is.

4. SOLID SNAKE (MGS2)

His stealthy skills would be perfect for breaking into the shopping centre for those last minute beer runs. And with his shonky mullet it's a good thing to have plenty of reasons to send him away.

5. LARA CROFT (TOMB RAIDER)

Pretty obvious really, she's dead sexy and she's tough enough to be the party's bouncer too. That accent of hers doesn't hurt either.

6. BARTENDER

(BUDWEISER BEER TAPPER)

Anyone's who's played this – or its watered-down sister game, *Root Beer Tapper* – will know that this guy's bartending skills make Tom Cruise's *Cocktail* effort look like amateur night at the amputees convention.

7. KASUMI (DEAD OR ALIVE 2)

You can't have a party without the beautiful bouncing girls from *Dead or Alive*. And from what we've heard beach volleyball is the only ball sport they like to play.

8. ICEMAN

(X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM)

There's no point in having Snakey smuggle half a bottleshop of grog in if you've got nothing to keep it chilled.

9. PARAPPA THE RAPPER

(PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2)

It doesn't matter how many lovelies you get in the door, there won't be any groovin' – vertical or horizontal – until PaRappa's got the toons pumping.

10. ABE (ABE'S ODDYSEE)

You can't party unless you have the right snacks. Nothing beats Abe's home cooked Paramite Pies!

Let's party!



WHO YA GONNA CALL?

POINT & SHOOT

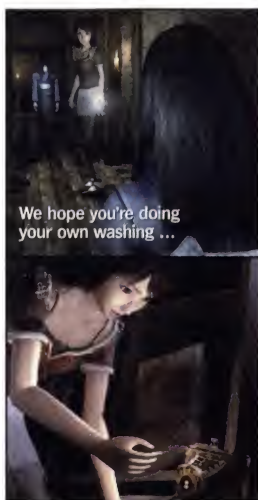
Project Zero 2 increases your shudder speed

PROJECT ZERO SHOOK THE SURVIVAL-HORROR GENRE UP

when it was released in 2002. Rather than blazing away with guns at hordes of nasties, it armed you with only a camera and put you up against a horror that was largely only hinted at, making it all the more terrifying.

Its follow-up, *Project Zero 2: Crimson Butterfly*, is actually a prequel to the first game, and will feature a new story, characters, improved graphics and refined gameplay.

OPS2 also has some really interesting news to reveal about the game. Be sure to stay tuned ...



BIG BALLS

BLING-BLING & BASKETBALL RINGS

Get the inside stuff on NBA Ballers

WHILE PREVIOUS NBA-ENDORSED VIDEOGAMES

have focused primarily on the action on-court, Midway's *NBA Ballers* will focus on the consequences off the court. Like if you don't make that dunk, you won't get respect from your peeps, or the coin to

buy a new chromed-out car or some ice for yo' bitch. Sorry, we got carried away.

Ballers is a one-on-one only game that features 60 of the current NBA stars. You can also play the game online or off and lead your chosen player from rags to riches.



THE YEAR THAT WAS

1982

Each month OPS2 revs up the time machine and takes you back to yesteryear

1982 WAS ALL ABOUT TWO GAMES:

Pac-Man and *E.T.* Everyone wanted to play *Pac-Man* but nobody wanted to play *E.T.* *Pac-Man* was so hot in the arcades that its sequel, *Ms. Pac-Man*, became the most successful arcade game in history, selling more than 115,000 units in North America alone. There were also a number of "enhancement chips" doing the rounds. Arcade owners could slap these on the *Pac-Man* arcade boards to alter the gameplay with features like new maps and new items – the most popular of which replaced the fruit with Coke cans. *Pac-Man* fever soon spread to the home, with Atari releasing a version on its popular Atari 2600 console. Unfortunately for Atari the public largely ignored it because the gameplay failed to match what was being offered in the arcades. Even worse for Atari, the company had been so confident in *Pac-Man*'s success it produced more

EYE ON YOU

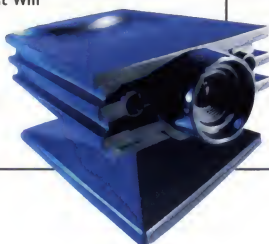
GET IN THE GAME

Another use for the Eye Toy

WE'VE BEEN ANTICIPATING IT ever since the Eye Toy was released last year, and now it's finally happening. Sony has made an agreement with Digimask, a company that has created technology that enables you to create 3D reproductions of your own head and put them into your games.

Using the Eye Toy to take a couple of shots of your mug, you'll then be able to create a fully animated 3D reproduction of yourself and save it to memory card for use in games that support the Digimask technology.

Sony already has several titles in development that will support Digimask. The first are set to be launched this coming July.



BIG GETS BIGGER

SPLITTING TIME AND BURNING OUT

EA grabs two of videogames' most beloved franchises



THE TIMESPLITTERS AND BURNOUT SERIES' have been responsible for many extended lunchtimes and sleepless nights for the team at OPS2. So imagine our childlike glee when we found out that EA is bringing the third instalment of not one but both of them by the end of this year! *Timesplitters 3*, the follow up to the PS2's greatest shooter with enhanced

graphics, controls and storyline – and online play for the first time. Bliss.

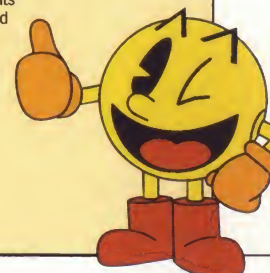
With *Burnout 3* we can expect there will be more cars, tracks, modes, improved graphics and online play, but we can't rule out that EA might apply its world-conquering *Need for Speed* licence to the game and introduce elements from its own series. We feel the need for speed.



cartridges than there were consoles. Atari was able to make some of its money back by suing Magnavox over its *Pac-Man* clone but it wasn't long before Atari was in trouble again.

With Spielberg's *E.T.* movie raking in cash across the globe, Atari signed up for a slice of the action with the videogame rights. Atari announced that it would have the game ready for Christmas, produced five million cartridges and waited for the truckloads of money to roll in. The only trucks involved though, were the ones used to haul the millions of unsold cartridges out to landfills in New Mexico.

As it turns out, hiring one programmer and giving him six weeks to make a game isn't quite good enough. *E.T.* was a bug-riddled nightmare of a game that sold pitifully. When the dismal Atari 2600 sales were announced on December 7 its stock dropped 32 points in one day.



EA BOOKED FOR PSP

Sony has revealed it's signed videogame powerhouse Electronic Arts to produce games for its PSP. While no titles have been announced, EA has estimated that it will produce around a dozen titles in the first 12 months after the console launches. The agonising wait continues...



SEGA SNARES SAMURAI JACK

Sega is producing a game based on the Cartoon Network's *Samurai Jack*. *Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku* will feature all the voice talent from the Emmy award-winning cartoon series, and the gameplay will consist of kinetic action sequences, noodle-scratching puzzles and many engaging sub quests. Besides *Samurai Jack* Sega is also set to deliver *Astro Boy* sometime this year.

GETAWAY CREATOR GETS AWAY

Brendan McNamara, the Australian-born mind behind *The Getaway* has returned down under and set up his own development studio. Team Bondi comprises several former members of the *Getaway* team, and is developing a yet-to-be-announced PlayStation 3 game. You can count on *OPS2* to report the first details. Mainly because *OPS2* is within walking distance of the studios, and we've already rummaged through their garbages!



HADO-RYUKENI OR SOMETHING ...

THQ has announced that it will be packing in the feature length *Street Fighter II: The Animated Movie* with its soon-to-be-released compilation *Hyper Street Fighter II: The Anniversary Edition*. Unlike your average compilation, *Hyper Street Fighter II* will allow you to mix and match characters from the different games! Cool eh!

SOCOM DEMO SLIP-UP

While we are immaculately dressed, the team at *OPS2* isn't perfect. Thus explains the blunder we made with last month's demo disc, when we incorrectly featured *SOCOM II* on the DVD case. It was actually the original *SOCOM*, not the new sequel. We'd like to apologise for any confusion or disappointment. We've forced ourselves to play *Celebrity Deathmatch* for hours as punishment. Seriously.

DEADLY SKIES LIVES ON PS2

Deadly Skies air combat series is making its debut on the PS2 with its third instalment, *Deadly Skies III*. *DSIII* will be the best looking yet, thanks to the graphical power of the PS2, a larger number of characters and a heap of planes including the F-15E 'Strike Eagle' and Eurofighter Typhoon. All up there's set to be 130 aircraft and a massive 60 missions to complete.

loading...

SHAKE THAT ASS

FOR LEFT FEET ONLY

It's time to boogie down once more



WE CAN'T CLAIM TO BE GREAT DANCERS AT OPS2.

We're more David Brent than John Travolta when it comes to treading the boards.

But that doesn't stop us tapping up an electrical storm on our dance mat at every given opportunity. And a new opportunity is about to present itself in the form of Konami's new groove collection, *Dance Revolution Extreme*.

Its title might terrorise the grammar checker in your word processor, but the good news is

that *DDR Extreme* will feature over 100 minutes of licensed and original dance music. The bad news is that the track listing is yet to be announced. Sorry.

Popular modes from previous games in the series such as the fat-burnin' *Work Out* mode and customisable *Edit* mode return, along with the all-new *Mission* mode which involves completing specific challenges that can be played by a single player, or as an intense two-player battle.

It's not out 'til spring, so there's still time to practice! ♪

BLOOD-LUSTY FPS

SADDLE UP, SUCK SOME BLOOD

Dracula's mates go west. Yee-hah-ah-ah-ah...



IN THE PAST, no developer has been bold enough to take on the Vampire-horror Western FPS genre. No, we're not sure why either, but the good news is that Sammy Studios is set to debut the first title in said genre, *Darkwatch: Curse of the West* at the end of 2004.

Darkwatch revolves around the character of Jericho Cross, an outlaw gunslinger who is bitten by a vampire lord. To save the West and avoid the full transformation into a fully-fanged bloodsucker, Jericho must track

down and kill the dark lord.

But he'll need more than one garlic-coated bullet – there'll be plenty of undead minions to dispense with along the way. Helping you will be a wide assortment of weaponry, including pistols, rifles, shotguns, rocket-launchers and dynamite.

The world of *Darkwatch* will be a massive one packed with non-linear missions. You won't have to cover it all on foot though; Jericho will have a faithful horse to ride on. It should be interesting to say the least! ♪



SONY'S SWIMMING LESSONS

AUSSIE CHAMP MICHAEL KLIM is the new face of the Royal Life Saving Society's ongoing efforts to keep children safe in Australia's waterways. Our friends at Sony Computer Entertainment have thrown their substantial weight alongside Coca-Cola and the Commonwealth government for this worthy cause. The *Swim and Survive* campaign will be promoted at 8,000 primary schools and 1000 aquatic facilities across Australia.

The sponsors have said the *Swim and Survive* program marks the beginning of an ongoing commitment to encourage children to adopt an active lifestyle. Considering how many PS2 Eye Toys flew off shelves last year we're betting the kids won't be too hard to convince. ♪

KAHN KICKS A GOAL AGAINST EA

A GERMAN COURT RECENTLY RULED IN FAVOUR OF OLIVER KAHN'S LAWSUIT

against Electronic Arts over their use of his likeness in *FIFA 2002*. Kahn maintained that although EA had permission from FIFA to use players' likenesses, they did not have any specific permission from him. EA is appealing the decision but if it's upheld it will have a huge impact on sports videogames. EA and other publishers would need to get individual permission from every player before their likeness could be used in games. This would likely lead to many players appearing in games as similar sounding players, like *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*'s "Kalm" instead of "Kahn". ♪



JOLLY AND JELLY

GIRL ON GIRL ON CANVAS ACTION

Konami puts the X into WWX

IT MAY HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY CONFINED TO BATHING POOLS full of jelly in seedy smoke-filled pubs, but women's wrestling is finally set to make its debut in a videogame courtesy of Konami.

WWX: Rumble Rose will contain a full roster of sexy grappling vixens, including the big names Dixie Clemets from the US and Reiko Hinomoto. You probably haven't heard of them as they're entirely fictitious!

WWX has a good chance of being successful, aside from the hilarious hair-pulling premise Konami has co-created it with Yukes Entertainment, renowned for its WWE SmackDown! series so Rumble Rose should be built on a pretty solid wrestling engine. Unlike the popular WWE series, WWX allows gamers to change the wrestlers' personalities through gameplay

by choosing to fight dirty or fair, resulting in a good or bad persona for the character. The personality change then impacts on their costume, attitude and wrestling style.

With any luck we'll get our hands on a playable build at this year's E3. There's no truth to the rumour that we'll be partaking in a proposed games mag editor's Bra and Panties match. Well maybe. ♫



It's not so much oil, but it's now more about slime!



STARR REPORT

What to consume, and when

YOU'RE SETTLING DOWN FOR A HARDWARE GAMING SESSION ... you have your favourite cushion, a chamber pot and your lucky customised controller ... but what about food? The Starr Report helps you prepare for every occasion.

Well, the easiest is sports games – potato crisps and beer – duh! The exception is beach volleyball. For that you really need something like margaritas and strawberry cheesecake.

For the fantasy RPG, a selection of bikkies and dip with, if you can get it, honey mead, or ale. For the sci-fi RPG, substitute the ale for midori (if you're over 18 of course) or any other green drink. The colour alone will make you feel suitably futuristic. If you can get it to steam, so much the better. Billed cordial – yum.

For war games, nothing will do but simulated rations. Get the driest biscuits you can find, cheese-in-a-can, and drink only water – the muddier the better.

This goes for first-person shooters, too – to give you that fighting edge.

For platformers, you can only consume food beginning with the letter 'P'. You know, pizza, pretzels, pilsner and a drop of plonk.

Fighting games really require something you can eat while pulling off complicated combos. I recommend one of those beer hats, with something stimulating and caffeinated on one side (probably a cola-like beverage) and on the other, some kind of soup. Lucky thing you have that chamber pot, eh?

The food for racing games is pretty obvious – doughnuts. Doughnuts and vodka, because this is the one time you can drink and drive, so you may as well get the most out of it, right? Right?

For strategy games, it has to be cucumber sandwiches and tea. In those little bone-china cups. Hey, it worked for the British.

For party games, a platter of fairy bread, lukewarm mini-dogs and sausage rolls, and cheeseels is ideal. Wash it down with flat lemonade.

And finally for the survival horror, give yourself a treat. Dim the lights and serve up plates of mushed-up red jelly, cherry pie and strawberry ice-cream. Follow with shots of warmed absinthe (if you dare, this stuff is NASTY. And illegal, mind.) ♫

MICHELLE STARR
Games Writer

* This guide is for recommendation purposes only. OPS2 refuses to be held responsible for anyone actually following above advice.

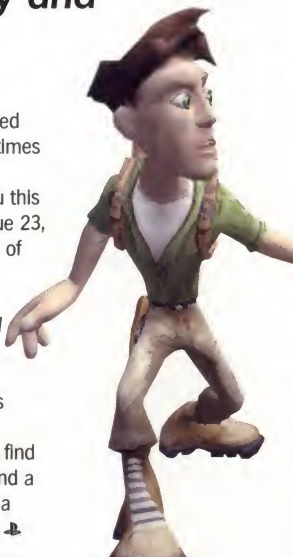
NEED A MAGNIFIER?

HARRY UP

Find Pitfall Harry and win a game!

AFTER ALL THE UPSET EMAILS FROM READERS who had searched the mag, back to front, dozens of times and not found Ethan Hunt, we've decided to go a little easier on you this month (Ethan was on page 40 Issue 23, about two centimetres to the right of Martin Edmonson's head).

Activision has joined in on the fun by giving us eight copies *Pitfall Harry* and four movie passes to the comedy *Agent Cody Banks 2*. We've hidden a mini version of this render of Harry somewhere in this magazine. The first four readers to find him will win themselves a game and a movie pass. The next four will win a copy of the game. Go on, get to it! ♫



HOW TO ENTER – Send entries to OPS2@derwentward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line or alternatively, send envelopes via snail mail to: Official PlayStation 2 Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1555. Email entrants are entitled to one email per competition only. Entries should be clearly marked and include: The name of the competition, your name, age, email, phone number (mobile also) and address. All competitions close 21 April, 2004. This comp is also open to NZ residents.

BACK TO RETRO

OLD SKOOL

Contra finally goes 3D

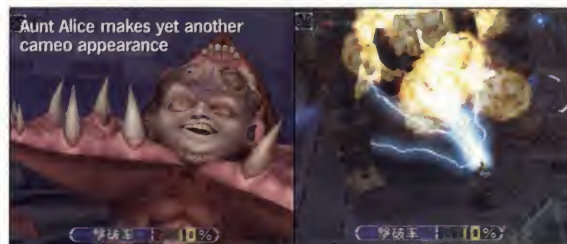
THE SERIES HAS BEEN AROUND LONGER THAN MANY OF US, but it's only now that *Contra* is moving into the 3D realm.

Neo Contra will still feature the non-stop reflex-based shoot-'em-up action that has been a trademark of the series, only now we'll have to fend off attackers from all directions. Gigantic bosses and explosive weapon power-ups are set to litter the

environments.

Series hero Bill Rizer returns and is accompanied by a striking newcomer to the franchise, Genbel Jaguar Yagyu, a mysterious Samurai warrior. As if the characters themselves weren't stylised enough, *Neo Contra* will also feature highly destructible environments that should ensure that the game is visually spectacular.

Neo Contra blasts into 3D in November. ♫





LOADING INCOMING

PS2 RELEASE SCHEDULE



MARCH

Champions of Norrath	Action	Ubisoft
Cy Girls	Action	Atari
Deadly Skies 3	Simulation	Atari
Forbidden Siren	Survival Horror	Sony
LMA Manager 2004	Sports	Atari
Megaman X7	Action	THQ
MTX: Mototrax	Racing	Activision
MX Unleashed	Racing	THQ
Nightshade	Action	Atari
Pacific Theatre of Operations IV	Strategy	THQ
R: Racing	Racing	EA
Rainbow Six 3	FPS	Ubisoft
Rise to Honor	Action	Sony
Romance of the Three Kingdoms	Strategy	THQ
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	Adventure	THQ
SingStar (Pop & Classic)	Music	Sony
SOCOM II: US Navy Seals	Action	Sony
Spawn: Armageddon	Action	EA
Spy Hunter 2	Action	Red Ant
The Cat in the Hat	Adventure	Vivendi
Whiplash	Platformer	Atari

APRIL

.hack Volume 1 Infection	RPG	Atari
AFL Live: Premiership Edition	Sports	Acclaim
Allas	Action	Acclaim
Dancing Stage Fever	Dancing	Atari
Firefighter FD 18	Action	Atari
Glass Rose	RPG	THQ
Headhunter Redemption	Action	Atari
Muppet Party	Party game	Take 2
Red Dead Revolver	Action	Take 2
Riding Spirits II	Racing	THQ
Serious Sam: The Next Encounter	Shooter	Take 2
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TBC	Take 2
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Action	Atari
Way of the Samurai 2	Action	THQ
World Championship Rugby	Sports	Acclaim

MAY

Euro 2004	Sports	EA
Fright Night	Action	EA
Harry Potter: Prisoner of Azkaban	Adventure	EA
Hyper Street Fighter 2	Fighter	THQ
Richard Burns Rally	Sports	Atari
Showdown: LOW	Action	Acclaim
Van Helsing	Action	Vivendi

JUNE

Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Shooter	Acclaim
Hiltman: Contracts	Action	Atari
Shrek 2	Adventure	Activision
Transformers Armada	Action	Atari
Trivial Pursuit Unhinged	Strategy	Atari

JULY

Gran Turismo 4	Racing	Sony
Spider-Man 2	Action	Activision
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Stealth	Ubisoft

SEPTEMBER

Gradus V	Shooter	Atari
V8 Supercars 2	Racing	Atari

PS2 RELEASE SCHEDULE



TBC IN 2004

100 Bullets	Action	Acclaim
BloodRayne 2	Action	Atari
Blood Will Tell	Action	Sega
Burnout 3	Racing	EA
Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Shooter	Activision
Conflict: Vietnam	Shooter	Atari
Dark Cloud 3	RPG	Sony
Dead to Rights 2: Hell to Pay	Action	EA
Driv3r	Driving/action	Atari
Fast and the Furious	Racing	Vivendi
Fight Club	Fighter	Vivendi
Final Fantasy XII	Adventure	EA
Grand Theft Auto IV	Action	Take 2
Kaena	Adventure	TBC
Killzone	Shooter	Sony
Kingdom Hearts 2	RPG	Sony
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Action	Atari
Metal Gear Solid 3	Action	Atari
Moto GP 4	Racing	Sony
Neo Contra	Shooter	Atari
Nightmare Creatures 3	Action	Ubisoft
Onimusha 3	Adventure	Capcom
Prince of Persia 2	Platform	Ubisoft
Project Zero 2	Horror	Ubisoft
Red Ninja: End of Honor	Action	Vivendi
Resident Evil: Outbreak	Action	Capcom
Silent Hill 4	Horror	Atari
Starcraft: Ghost	Action	Vivendi
Star Wars Battlefront	Action	EA
Supercar GT	Racing	EA
Syphon Filter: Omega Strain	Action	Sony
Terminator 3: Redemption	Action	Atari
The Getaway, Part 2	Action	Sony
The Incredibles	Action	THQ
The Lord of the Rings Trilogy	Action	EA
The Movies	Simulation	Activision
The Punisher	Action	THQ
The Suffering	Action	Red Ant
The Wanderers	Action	Take 2
Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Xmas	Action	THQ
TimeSplitters 3	FPS	EA
Tomb Raider VII	Adventure	Atari
Ty: Bush Rescue	Platformer	EA
World's Scariest Police Chases	Action	Vivendi
X-Men: Legends	RPG	Activision

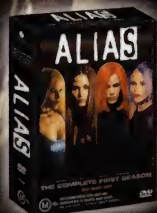


PS2 TOP 40 GAMES CHART



GfK

RANK	TITLE	CATEGORY	DISTRIBUTOR
1	Need For Speed: Underground	Racing	EA
2	Rugby League	Sports	Tru Blu
3	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Adventure	Vivendi
4	Cricket 2004	Sports	EA
5	Lord Of The Rings Return King	Adventure	EA
6	EyeToy: Play	Compilation	Sony
7	GTA Twin Pack	Adventure	Take 2
8	Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun	Action	EA
9	GTA: Vice City	Adventure	Take 2
10	Manhunt	Adventure	Take 2
11	Dragonball Z: Budokai 2	Action	Atari
12	Tony Hawk's Underground	Sports	Activision
13	WWE Smackdown! HCTP	Sports	THQ
14	Ratchet & Clank 2	Adventure	Sony
15	True Crime: Streets of LA	Adventure	Activision
16	Crash Nitro Kart	Racing	Vivendi
17	The Sims: Bustin Out	Strategy	EA
18	Finding Nemo	Adventure	THQ
19	Prince of Persia: Sands of Time	Adventure	Ubisoft
20	Tiger Woods PGA 2004	Sports	EA
21	Max Payne 2	Action	Take 2
22	Dancing Stage MegaMix (w Mat)	Music	Atari
23	Dog's Life	Strategy	Sony
24	Mega 4 Pack of Games	Compilation	Acclaim
25	Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness	Adventure	Atari
26	Jak II: Renegade	Adventure	Sony
27	SOCOM: US Navy SEALs	Action	Sony
28	Rugby 2004	Sports	EA
29	FIFA 2004	Sports	EA
30	Soul Calibur 2	Fighter	EA
31	YuGiOh Duelist Of Roses	Strategy	Atari
32	NBA Live 2004	Sports	EA
33	EyeToy: Groove	Dancing	Sony
34	WRC 3	Racing	Sony
35	Conflict Desert Storm	Action	Atari
36	Conflict Desert Storm 2	Action	Atari
37	Time Crisis 3 (G-Con bundle)	Action	Sony
38	Atari Triple Pack	Compilation	Atari
39	Virtua Tennis 2	Sports	Acclaim
40	SSX 3	Sports	EA



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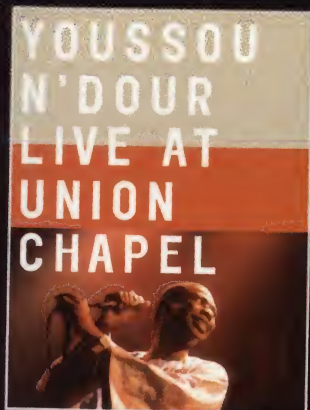
PlayStation 2



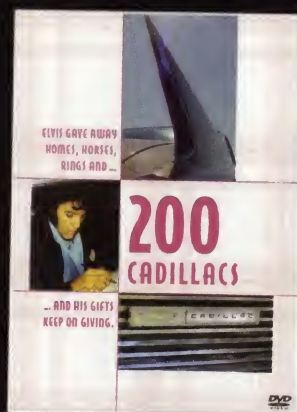
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pre-play

PRE-PLAY CONTRIBUTORS: TRISTAN OGILVIE, ANTHONY O'CONNOR, LUKE REILLY, NARAVAN PATTISON, MIKEY FOLEY

Previewing the new games you voted to read about!

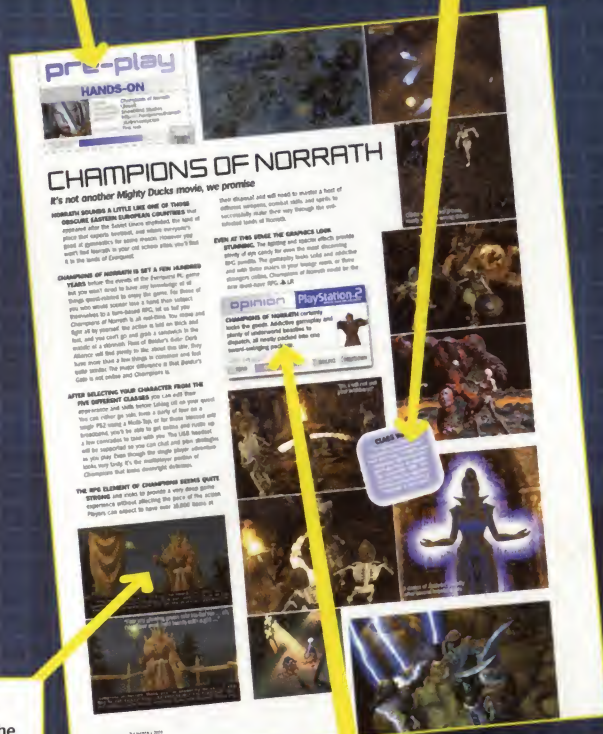
WELCOME TO PRE-PLAY!

SO WHAT'S ALL THIS THEN? Our pledge is to keep all the big games under constant surveillance, as directed by you! Whenever a cool new game bleeps loud on your radar, write to us – we'll dig up exclusive new screens, information and interviews with the creators, or bring you first impressions from playable code.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED? To vote in our Most Wanted charts, email us on OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au and we'll also look for comments from the official forums at au.playstation.com. Get voting now!

INFO BOX It's here you'll find out who makes a game, how complete it is, when it's due to hit the stores and if there's any more information online.

INFO BURSTS Keep an eye out for these blobs, where we'll drop in facts, rants, quotations, devil's advocate opinions and anything extra you should know.




LATEST SCREENS So how's the game looking? We show the hits of the future in all their visual splendour.

OPINION BOX What do we think of it so far? We reveal our thoughts and also include what you'd like to see in the game – visit the forums at au.playstation.com to get involved.

MOST WANTED

Which upcoming games do you want to see more of? Email or write to us and we'll uncover the latest details on your future favourites!

POSITION	GAME	WHAT?
1	 JUICED The game that leaves <i>Need for Speed</i> choking on its exhaust	HANDS-ON PAGE 20 EXCLUSIVE!
2	 RISE TO HONOR OPS2 wraps two fists of fury around the Jet Li fight-fest. We came away with a lot of bruises but with big smiles too!	NEW SCREENS PAGE 22 EXCLUSIVE!
3	 STARCRAFT: GHOST OPS2 jets off to LA for the scoop on this sci-fi blockbuster.	HANDS-ON PAGE 24 EXCLUSIVE!
4	 CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH Made by the boys behind <i>Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance</i> , this is looking like the 2004 co-op game to beat.	HANDS-ON PAGE 26 EXCLUSIVE!
5	 THIS IS SOCCER 2004 TIS aims to slip one past the current soccer champs, FIFA and Pro Evo Soccer.	HANDS-ON PAGE 27 EXCLUSIVE!

ALSO IN pre-play THIS MONTH

NIGHTSHADE.....PAGE 28
FORBIDDEN SIREN.....PAGE 29
KAENA.....PAGE 32



Which forthcoming games would you like to see in Pre-Play next month? Visit the forums at au.playstation.com, email us at OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au (remember to put 'Pre-Play' in the subject line) or write by post to Pre-Play, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 2002. Vote now!

PREVIEW



NAME Juiced
PUBLISHER Acclaim
DEVELOPER Acclaim
WEBSITE www.acclaim.com
LAST SEEN OPS2#23

PERCENTAGE
COMPLETE

60%

RELEASE
DATE
OCTOBER
2004



JUICED

Leaves Need for Speed Underground choking on its smoke

STYLE AND PERFORMANCE are the two most important elements of any street racer's ride. Far from being content with out-of-the-box, production line cars, every serious street racer tricks their ride out with all sorts of internal and external mods. We've had a small taste of the modding scene in *Midnight Club 2* and *Need for Speed Underground*, but *Juiced* will be the first one to steer away from cheap arcade thrills and let players mod their cars in the only arena that really matters: a hyper-realistic *Gran Turismo*-style sim.

MORE THAN 400 OFFICIALLY BRANDED CAR PARTS CAN BE SCREWED, bolted or sprayed onto your dream machine to give it the grunt to win races and that bling bling look to drop jaws. Things get really impressive when you realise that every last car part subtly affects the car's handling and performance. Getting extra speed out of a better set of gears or tighter cornering from new suspension is expected. What's not expected though is that everything, right down to the type of skirt you bolt on will affect the way your car handles in a tangible way. It's not all about engine power though, adding that shiny layer of pearlescent paint or those sleek vinyls won't make your car go any faster but they will help you win the crowds and earn the respect of your rivals.

EARNING RESPECT IN JUICED IS ESSENTIAL, not only for getting access to new racing modes, but for attracting new team members. As your reputation grows, more AI drivers will approach you and ask to join your team. It's possible to have two other

computer-controlled cars racing along with you as part of your team. By giving them commands via the controller (or the headset if you're flash) you can tell them to 'push harder' at critical moments or to 'ease off' if they've got room to spare. Having them push for too long is risky though, because it radically increases the chances that they will botch a corner and end up flirting with their groupies from a hospital bed.

WHEN YOU CRASH IN JUICED be prepared for a lot more pain than usual. As well as losing valuable positions in the race, your car will get physically damaged – affecting its performance and leaving you with a hefty bill to get it repaired. As if that wasn't bad enough, crashes will also lower your respect level. You don't even want to know how low your reputation will be if you smack into one of the other drivers and scratch up their low-flying babe-magnet. **B. NP**

opinion

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

JUICED looks like it will leave *Need for Speed Underground* nervously checking its mirrors and have the speed freaks lining up around the block to take it for a spin. Keep your eyes out for this one, if you can.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID ☐ WARM ☐ HOT ☐ **BOILING** ☒ MELTDOWN ☐



The 'right doughnut' is always the one at the back of the box



The old slip-streaming trick – it never gets old

AUSSIE GRUNT

We've seen the Aussie mean machines perform in *Gran Turismo 3* and *V8 Supercars*, but for the first time ever we get to take the mighty Holdens off the racetracks and watch them thrash out some nosebleed-inducing speeds on city streets. The 2003 Holden Commodore and Monaro will both be testing their might against more than 50 officially licensed international cars. Bring it on!



Driving Miss Daisy fans should look elsewhere



Finally they've legalised Grade A Speed



THE FULL EXPERIENCE
We're not saying there's anything wrong with split-screen multiplayer hijinks, but who'd turn down a full screen to themselves? Not us. Acclaim has taken this into account and provided us with swish online and i-link head-to-head racing modes to keep full screen fan happy.



Winning isn't the most important thing – it's the only thing!



NAME *Rise to Honor*
 PUBLISHER Sony
 DEVELOPER Sony
 WEBSITE www.au.playstation.com
 LAST SEEN OPS2#19

PERCENTAGE
COMPLETE

90%

RELEASE
DATE
MARCH
2004

RISE TO HONOR

OPS2 wraps two fists of fury around the Jet Li fight-fest ...

WHY ON EARTH DID BRUCE LEE MAKE THOSE FUNNY

little squeaking noises whenever he was performing martial arts? And those wide-eyed facial expressions – the ones that made him look as though he was constantly surprised? Maybe it was because he knew he could one-inch punch the lights out of anyone who dared to make fun of him. That magnificent bastard.

OF COURSE, WITHOUT BRUCE LEE TO PIONEER THE

martial arts-based action film there would be no Jackie Chan, Chuck Norris or Jet Li (born Li Lian Jie), the charismatic ass-kicker who has featured in a few Hollywood action epics including *Romeo Must Die* and *The One*. And now he's starring in a videogame.

LI HAS LENT HIS PHYSICAL LIKENESS, VOICE AND

motion-captured moves to the main character Kit Yun in Sony's *Rise to Honor*. Yun is the trusted bodyguard of a recently assassinated Hong Kong mob boss; whose dying wish was for Yun to transport his daughter Michelle to San Francisco and provide protection for her from the attention of rival gangs.

YES, IT'S THE SAME OLD ACTION MOVIE PLOT, BUT

fortunately it's not the same old action gameplay. The combat controls have been simplified to provide a more dynamic arcade experience; the right thumbstick is used rather than the usual ⊗, △, ⊙ and ○ for punches and kicks, enabling Yun to attack anyone in a full 360 degree arc around him. Pressing the stick in the direction of a nearby enemy causes Yun to perform a strike without actually having to turn around

and focus on that enemy. You can chain up to five moves to create various combos, and link them using the button for special 'adrenaline attacks'.

WHEN FEET AND FISTS AREN'T ENOUGH, YOU CAN

pick up random objects such as pieces of furniture to smack your foes with. However, when the going gets really tough it's time to bust out the firearms and indulge in John Woo-style shoot-outs. Gun targeting also relies on the thumbstick, so expect plenty of no-look shooting and *Max Payne*-style slow-motion dives.

THE STYLISTED VISUALS AND CINEMATIC CAMERA

enhance the presentation of *Rise to Honor*, and the heavily destructible environments along with the lighting and particle effects ensure that there's always plenty of fireworks onscreen. The story is told via real-time cut scenes, but hopefully these won't hinder the pacing of the game too much. **TO**

opinion

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AUSTRALIA

RISE TO HONOR is coming along very nicely indeed. The gameplay looks to be varied enough and is complimented by an intuitive control scheme. With a bit of more polish, this could have everybody kung fu fightin' when it's released.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN

KEEPING IT IN CONTEXT

Throughout *Rise to Honor*, **LB** is used as a multi-purpose context-sensitive action button. When you're in a scrap you can use it to block attacks, grab enemies, run along walls or perform counter attacks in conjunction with **RB**, and when you're in a gunfight you can use it to take cover behind objects. The system works really well and ensures that *Rise to Honor* is a fluid action experience.



"All I asked for was an oil change!" BLAM!



"Hmm, that ceiling needs to be painted!"



It's not going to stay quiet for much longer ...



"I'll teach you for not washing your hands!"



"... And here's my impersonation of a twistie..."



HIIIIIEE-YAH!
Respected martial arts choreographer Cory Yuen directed the games' fight sequences. Yuen was responsible for the action in *Lethal Weapon 4* and *Cradle 2 the Grave*.



"They call me Jet because I'm fast, not because I've got a spacious cockpit ..."

HANDS-ON



NAME Starcraft: Ghost
PUBLISHER Vivendi
DEVELOPER Blizzard
WEBSITE www.blizzard.com/ghost/
LAST SEEN OPS2#24

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

70%

RELEASE DATE
LATE 2004

Introducing Nova – stealth action star of the future



DISAPPEARING TRICK

Arguably the most unique element of the game is Nova's selection of Ghost abilities. By focusing her mental powers Nova is able to turn invisible, slow down time and see things in thermal vision for brief periods of time. The invisibility is by far the coolest trick, but don't get too comfortable because enemies can still hear you or scramble your invisible powers by shooting you with high-tech beams.



That looks like one angry piece of popcorn chicken



STARCRRAFT: GHOST

It'd take more than Bill Murray and the boys to bust this ghost!

YES, IT'S AN ACTION TITLE SET IN THE SAME

universe as the enormously popular *Starcraft* strategy games that have dominated the PC gaming world for years. And yes, it stars a sassy young lass with super powers, but after a few minutes play you can't help but notice how similar the game feels to titles such as *Metal Gear Solid* and *Splinter Cell*. It looks like this ghost has spent a while haunting *Solid Snake* and *Sam Fisher* because she is set to be the new master of stealth. There are patrolling guards to avoid, boxes to hide in, necks to snap, dead bodies to search and drag into the shadows, security cameras, base alarms and pretty much every other staple of the ever-popular stealth genre.

THANKFULLY, BLIZZARD HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACT

like a master surgeon, cutting out the still-beating heart of *Metal Gear Solid 2's* gameplay and transplanting it into the *Starcraft* universe, leaving behind a messy pile of pointless CODEC romances and overly complicated story sequences. Get a little further into the game though, and you'll start to notice all the brand new gameplay elements that have been added. Firstly, Sam Fisher wouldn't be so proud of being able to hang from a water pipe with

one arm while shooting with the other if he'd seen what Nova can do. Using that same pipe Nova can jump from the ground to grab it, flick her body around so that her legs are gripping the pipe, then hang upside-down and snipe enemies with her rifle – all with the sort of grace that'd put most professional pole dancers to shame. And that's only one of a whole series of dynamic gymnastic moves that Nova can use to surprise enemies.

STARCRRAFT: GHOST GETS ANOTHER JUICY

injection of originality in the weapons department. Nova's arsenal of guns includes a pistol, a machine gun, a sniper rifle and a very robust flamethrower. Nova also carries a hefty bag of grenades, including smoke and frag grenades, as well as the more interesting sticky and swarm varieties. By far the most impressive weapons at her disposal, however, are the tiny spider robots. In a nod to *Minority Report's* reconnaissance robots, Nova can toss out little spheres that quickly sprout legs and run off to do her bidding. The various abilities of the robots include distracting enemies, burrowing under the ground and turning into mines or flying ahead to scout out danger.



All the alien races will be familiar to *Starcraft* players





"Nova ... I am your mother!" "Noooooooooooo!"



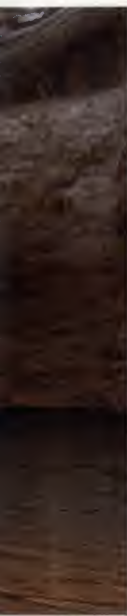
Are we the only ones thinking how difficult it would be to take a leak in that suit?



"Goodness, Graniny - what big teeth you have!"

HISTORY LESSON

If you're saying "Star what?", you should know that Starcraft was the ridiculously popular PC real-time strategy game released in 1998. Ghost takes all the creatures from the Starcraft universe and puts them into a stealth action title.



Thankfully these aliens bleed normal blood and not acid



When being stealthy fails, it's time to whip out the artillery



CONSIDERING YOU'RE FIGHTING A BUNCH OF aliens in the middle of space it's amazing how human they seem. Fear, anger, curiosity, disbelief and strategy are all employed by the game's characters with unprecedented realism. The searching patterns the troops perform after seeing something suspicious have been used before but it's their lifelike reactions that will really make you a believer. For example, if you suddenly uncloak (become visible) in front of an enemy they will either swear and go for their gun or run screaming in terror, depending on their unique personality. This adds a whole new dimension to stealth gameplay. **NP**



A gun that size can make you feel rather inadequate

opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

STARCRRAFT: GHOST borrows from the best, then adds in a whole universe of cool sci-fi action to create one of the hottest-looking games of 2004.

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

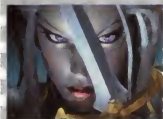
BOILING

MELTDOWN

Expect a popping and squirting sound to follow ...

MARCH | 2004 | PlayStation.2 | 25

HANDS-ON



NAME Champions of Norrath
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
DEVELOPER Snowblind Studios
WEBSITE <http://championsofnorrath.station.sony.com>
LAST SEEN First look

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

50%

RELEASE DATE
MARCH 2004

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH

It's not another Mighty Ducks movie, we promise

NORRATH SOUNDS A LITTLE LIKE ONE OF THOSE OBSCURE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES that appeared after the Soviet Union imploded, the kind of place that exports beetroot, and where everyone's good at gymnastics for some reason. However you won't find Norrath in your old school atlas; you'll find it in the lands of Everquest.

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH IS SET A FEW HUNDRED YEARS before the events of the Everquest PC game, but you won't need to have any knowledge of all things quest-related to enjoy the game. For those of you who would sooner lose a hand than subject themselves to a turn-based RPG, let us tell you *Champions of Norrath* is all real-time. You move and fight all by yourself, the action is laid on thick and fast, and you can't go and grab a sandwich in the middle of a skirmish. Fans of *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* will find plenty to like about this title; they have more than a few things in common and feel quite similar. The major difference is that *Baldur's Gate* is not online and *Champions* is.

AFTER SELECTING YOUR CHARACTER FROM THE FIVE DIFFERENT CLASSES you can edit their appearance and skills before taking off on your quest. You can either go solo, form a party of four on a single PS2 using a Multi-Tap, or for those blessed with broadband, you'll be able to get online and rustle up a few comrades to take with you. The USB headset will be supported so you can chat and plan strategies as you play. Even though the single player adventure looks very tasty, it's the multiplayer portion of *Champions* that looks downright delicious.

THE RPG ELEMENT OF CHAMPIONS SEEMS QUITE STRONG and looks to provide a very deep game experience without affecting the pace of the action. Players can expect to have over 10,000 items at

their disposal and will need to master a host of different weapons, combat skills and spells to successfully make their way through the evil-infested lands of Norrath.

EVEN AT THIS STAGE THE GRAPHICS LOOK

STUNNING. The lighting and special effects provide plenty of eye candy for even the most discerning RPG pundits. The gameplay looks solid and addictive and with three mates in your lounge room, or three strangers online, *Champions of Norrath* could be the new must-have RPG. **LR**

opinion

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH certainly looks the goods. Addictive gameplay and plenty of underworld beasties to dispatch, all neatly packed into one sword-swinging package.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN

Chicks with sticks! (Pheh, nearly said the wrong thing) ...



"No, I will not pull your wishbone!"

CLASS WAR

The different character classes in *Champions* each have their own strengths and weakness. Barbarians can wield any type of weapon, but lack magic skills. The wizards are the opposite, which makes choosing a character a tricky task.



Who amongst you will take up the sword, the staff, the hammer and drive this scourge from our land? If there be any who would lay down their life for the glory of Faudwer, for

"Fear my glowing green orb! Ha-ha! Ha ... oh, I've never even held hands with a girl ..."



Champions of Norrath, thank you for answering my call in what may be our darkest hour. The unthinkable has happened. Orcs and goblins, once mortal enemies, have now become allies and



I dream of Jeannie! Usually after several tequila shots ...



HANDS-ON



NAME *This is Football 2004*
PUBLISHER Sony Cambridge
DEVELOPER Sony
WEBSITE www.scee.com
LAST SEEN OPS2#16

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

80%

RELEASE DATE
APRIL 2004



They wanted a good position to watch the brawl



Before we both try and win at all costs, let's shake hands

WHO ARE YA?

El Salvador recently played an international match against Zimbabwe. Nothing much interesting was expected from these two minor soccer nations until it was revealed that the entire El Salvador squad was in fact made up of fake footballers. As if being tricked by a bunch of imposters wasn't enough for the Zimbabwe national side, they were also only able to record a nil-nil draw. Now that's embarrassing.



Not real soccer fans. Note their polite behaviour.



Bend it like Beckham: not just a good movie



Tackling and defence is one of the finer points of TIS2004

THIS IS SOCCER 2004

If this really is soccer, where are all the hooligans?

FOOTBALL, SOCCER, BIG GIRL'S BLOUSES kicking a pig's bladder around a field, whatever you want to call it you can't deny that it's slowly taking over the world. Not only the most popular sport on the planet but also fast becoming the most bloated genre on PS2. And now, following in the well-trodden, muddy footsteps of FIFA, PES, Club Football, ISS and all the other goal scoring wannabes we have *This is Soccer 2004* joining the crowd. Whether it can nutmeg the defenders and slide one through the legs of the superb PES or just languish in the ranks of also-rans remains to be seen.

BUILDING ON THE GOOD BITS FROM PREVIOUS TIS GAMES and totally re-designing the bits that weren't so hot, the makers have crammed in 18,000 players from 900 teams across 23 different leagues along with some seriously silky ball skills. Each player has his own individual style and attributes which basically means get the ball to the likes of Kewell, Beckham and Ronaldo and they'll have a much better chance of making the keeper look like a ham fisted monkey.

TIS2004 PLAYS A MUCH SLOWER MORE METHODICAL GAME than many of its PS2 rivals, promoting thoughtful build ups rather than frantic arcade style ball hoofing. Responding to our slight

criticism of PES3 (in which tackling is almost redundant due to being punished by the ref every time you dive in) the developers here have raised tackling to almost an art form. Timing a split-second sliding tackle to perfection is almost as satisfying as rocketing one into the back of the net.

AT THE MOMENT WE HAVE SOME CONCERNS about the delay between button presses and the players' responses. Getting Michael Owen to shoot is akin to telling him to nip down to the shops, eat a Mars bar and then decide if he fancies scoring or not. As for the online options, they'll play a major role in all of the tournaments and challenges *TIS2004* has to offer when it's released later this year. **MF**

opinion

PlayStation 2

TIS2004 might not have the looks to better FIFA or the finesse to outfox PES3 at the moment but still has plenty of development time to pull off something a bit special.

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN



Visuals have always been a strength of the TIS games



HANDS-ON

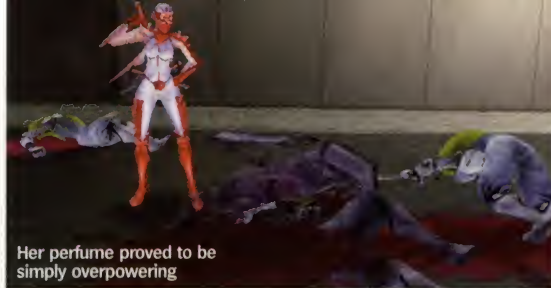


NAME Nightshade
PUBLISHER Sega
DEVELOPER Sega
WEBSITE <http://kunoichi.jp/>
LAST SEEN First look

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

90%

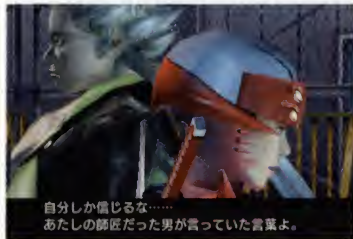
RELEASE DATE
MARCH 2004



Her perfume proved to be simply overpowering



Videogames: making drunken dreams a reality



自分しか信じるな……
あたしの師匠だった男が言っていた言葉よ。



By 2006, you'll soon be wearing clothes like this

NIGHTSHADE

Attention all demons: Get ready to have your arse kicked by a girl!

SEGA TOOK A PRETTY BIG GAMBLE WHEN IT RESURRECTED SHINOBI from the elephant's graveyard of classic games. Though the new *Shinobi* was lots of fun many people were put off by its old school difficulty level (that is, it was bloody hard) and distinct lack of mid-level checkpoints. Well now they've brought out another one and it seems that they're taking an even bigger gamble than before.

FOR A START NIGHTSHADE ISN'T REALLY A SEQUEL TO SHINOBI per se. It's more a side story that is related to *Shinobi* but in a "third-cousin-whose-name-you-can-never-really-remember" kind of way. As if this wasn't enough to mess with the tried and true formula this time around you're not even playing as Hotsuma (you know, the guy with the mad ninja skills and fruity red scarf from *Shinobi*). No, this time around you're taking on the role of Kunoichi, a sexy lady ninja with mad skills and two fruity looking scarf things that follow her movements like silken lap dogs.

THE GOOD NEWS IS that despite these fairly dramatic surface changes the charm of the *Shinobi* mythos remains. In fact if anything the amount of ninja powers here have been increased greatly and the drab, somewhat claustrophobic environments of *Shinobi* are a thing of the past. Fights generally occur outdoors in *Nightshade*, ranging from such eclectic locations as towering cranes precariously swinging atop skyscrapers to the back of a high tech, invisible stealth plane.

NIGHTSHADE IS STILL A TOUGH LITTLE COOKIE OF A TITLE and if you're not careful you will find yourself doing the same level over and over (and

probably smashing more than a few controllers in the process) however the inclusion of a Beginner's mode should keep everyone happy. Graphically the game is slightly unspectacular but from what we could see the lack of visual polish is more than made up for in speed and unrelenting action. As did *Shinobi* before it, *Nightshade* positively revels in mid-air combos where literally dozens of enemies are sliced and diced before they even know what hit them. Let's face it; those kinds of shenanigans never go out of style. **A-**

opinion

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

NIGHTSHADE doesn't look that pretty and it's hardly original but it definitely offers plenty of scantily clad ninja babes tearing evil monsters to pieces and in the end isn't that what life's all about?

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID	WARM	HOT	BOILING	MELTDOWN
-------	------	------------	---------	----------



Far from friends, we observe that a battle is about to take place



Yeah! Now that's the nice lookin' view!

HANDS-ON

FORBIDDEN
SIREN

NAME *Forbidden Siren*
 PUBLISHER SCEA
 DEVELOPER SCEI
 WEBSITE www.forbiddensiren.com
 LAST SEEN OPS2#20

PERCENTAGE
COMPLETE

80%

RELEASE
DATE
TBC 2004

"Hold your fire, men. I'm still not convinced that is the Hamburglar ..."



Anyone remember *Sirens* the movie? Phwoar!



"I don't suppose you've got a band-aid?"



"What do you think? Did I overdo it with the red eye shadow?"

FORBIDDEN SIREN

"Billy, you've got something in your eye ... oh it's an oozing trail of blood"

GIGGLING GHOULS WITH BLOOD STREAMING FROM THEIR EYES. A horrible groaning noise that seems to shake the very fabric of the Earth. Rivers running with thick crimson water. All this and more greet the unwary traveller who stumbles into the world of *Forbidden Siren*. As you can probably gather from the above description, *Forbidden Siren* is another entry in the survival horror genre. However, from what we've seen so far it's something very different from the gun toting action of the *Resident Evil* series and the twisted universe of *Silent Hill*.

DESCRIBING THE PLOT OF FORBIDDEN SIREN AT THIS STAGE Is nigh on impossible. The version we played has you controlling a large variety of characters at different time periods (including some hundreds of years in the past!). In fact, the action leaps about so much we're still not entirely sure what the hell is going on. Either the game is trying some new form of non-linear story telling and is revolutionary and unique or maybe it's just not finished yet. The sheer number of characters you can control (we counted five but are told there's more) may split the action up a little but it certainly gives you pieces of what appears to be a very large, complex puzzle.

STORY ISSUES ASIDE THE GRAPHICS ARE BEAUTIFUL and the overall atmosphere is both chilling and compelling. This is no mere "zombies are taking over the Earth" horror; this is something quite unique.

GAMEPLAY WISE FORBIDDEN SIREN PLAYS A LOT LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF SILENT HILL AND MANHUNT, with stealth being a very important element. A nice touch is your ability to Sightjack; that is using your mental powers you can slip into the minds of all those around you, be they friend or foe. This is done using the left analogue stick and means you can see what the ghouls see and make sure they're not looking at you! **AO**

opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

FORBIDDEN SIREN is strange and unsettling but it could also be the next evolutionary step in the survival horror genre. Let's just hope the plot makes a little more sense at the time of release.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN



"Go on, give us a kiss!"

BIGGER IS BETTER

One of the things that separates *Forbidden Siren* from other survival horrors is its sense of scope. This is no mere haunted house we're dealing with here. The world of *Forbidden Siren* seems to be warping into a dark dimension of gibbering insanity and painful death. Good times, kids, good times ...



Photocopying your face is wrong, kids





**He's delivering
a warm welcome
to evil bots everywhere.**



Publisher	Developer	Rating	Platforms		
 					

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"Gorgeous, chunky graphics, engaging characters and stacks of variety make Metal Arms an essential shooter... Superb - 9/10"

Official Australian Xbox Magazine

"Near perfect. Combining a hilarious single-player experience with a solid multiplayer mode, it's pretty hard to ask for more - 8/10"

Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

"Bursting with energy and a strong sense of humour... Gorgeously detailed environments that are as stylish as they are expansive... The game's cult status seems assured"

Australian gamesTM

"Hugely entertaining... Few who sample its cheeky robot-blasting will leave unimpressed - 4 Stars"

Sydney Morning Herald

www.metalarms.com



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HANDS-ON



NAME Kaena: Dark Lineage
PUBLISHER TBC
DEVELOPER Namco
WEBSITE www.namco.com
LAST SEEN First look

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

80%

RELEASE DATE
TBC 2004



"Knock, knock?
Er... Avon calling?"



The trek to Ella Cafe was dangerous, but ultimately worth it.



Unlike human males, the beasts cared not for Kaena's supple form



KAENA: DARK LINEAGE

Could this possibly be an epic tale with visuals to match?

UNLIKE THE HYPE THAT PRECEDED THE RELEASE OF THE FINAL FANTASY MOVIE, Kaena has had a much more low key development. Produced by those inimitably stylish French minds, it's a fully CG movie with a wealth of Hollywood voice talent, including Kirsten Dunst, Richard Harris and Anjelica Huston. Neatly dovetailing the movie is the PS2 title, which is being developed in conjunction with the film, enabling it to use some of the stunning CG movies to flesh out the tale.

KAENA IS THE UNSUSPECTING HEROINE OF THE TALE. A rebellious seventeen year old with a figure to have most grown men breathing a sigh of relief that she's not a few years younger, she lives in a fantastically realised tree world called "Axis." Her people constantly live in fear of the tree gods who demand a constant supply of sap to keep them appeased. However, Kaena sees things differently, refusing to bow to the god's demands and challenging the village elders at every opportunity. When she defies the elders authority one time too many Kaena unwittingly embarks on an adventure that will unveil the frightening truth behind her clan's tree world existence and reveal her to be the special chosen one.

THE ACTUAL MOVIE SEGMENTS LOOK ABSOLUTELY SUPERB and this glittering sheen of class and beauty doesn't end when the story stops and the game begins. The developers have done an impressive job of

realising the unique French vision of a world set within an unimaginably colossal tree. It makes a pleasant change to have a game with a truly original setting and it's also reassuring to know that developers are still able to impress us this far into the PS2's life.

EQUALLY STRIKING ARE THE IMAGINATIVELY VARIED CREATURES In Kaena. Every foe has a different attack and in a nod to the *Onimusha* games Kaena can dispatch them with a flurry of simply activated blows. However, there's more depth to your combat than that in *Onimusha*, with different weapons possessing a number of advanced attacks. The in game menu displays the button combinations and it's almost like a beat-'em-up as you learn the attacks and revel in Kaena's athletic feats. The game even compliments you on more elaborate attacks by flashing up successful combo messages on the screen. **MF**

opinion

PlayStation.2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

KAENA, with its stunning visuals and satisfying combat combined with a variety of puzzle orientated tasks and deep storyline, is looking like being one of the adventures to look out for in 2004.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN



Hungry and horny.
Typical male, eh ladies?



"Fancy a puff on
the magic dragon?"

*"This is fun, pure and simple,
loaded with wise cracks and
jibes at Hollywood".*

Sunday Telegraph

TWO COPS, TOUGH CASE, TOTAL CHAOS

*From the director of WHITE MEN CAN'T JUMP and the producer of THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT comes the explosive and hilarious HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE. This box office hit, now on DVD "will keep you on the edge of your seat with its adrenaline-pumped action."**

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- This DVD is packed with revealing special features including an audio commentary, 3 behind-the-scenes featurettes on the making of the movie with cast and crew interviews, talent profiles and much more!



BRING IT HOME. BRING IT ON.

Available Now

Inside Pandora's Box

WORDS: TRISTAN OGILVIE

OPS2 delves deep into the shadows of Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow



March 2004 will forever be remembered as the month that PS2 fans had to learn more arcane acronyms than a would-be astronaut on the eve of their entry exam to NASA.

Check your OPSAT. Reload your FA-MAS. This type of futuristic techno-babble will be coming thick and fast thanks to the release of *Rainbow Six 3*, *Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm*, and of course their fellow Tom Clancy brother, *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*.

The original *Splinter Cell* was almost single-handedly responsible for not only revolutionising the action stealth genre (thanks to its innovative use of lighting and acrobatic moves), but also for pushing the PS2 graphically to previously unseen heights. Both the night and thermal vision modes featured in *Splinter Cell* are tricks that have since been copied, almost to the extent of the Wachowski brothers' "Bullet Time". With *Pandora Tomorrow* not to be considered as a full sequel but more of an extension and exploration of the concepts from the first game, Ubisoft is set to again pioneer the genre. Just check out the new and innovative multiplayer modes, new moves and a brand new bag of gadgets.

Close to home

Whereas the previous game was seemingly set in another world for most Australians due to its Eastern European and Middle Eastern themes and characters, *Pandora Tomorrow* is based right in our backyard. The plot revolves around the conflict between East

Timor and government-supported Indonesian guerrillas. The leader of this guerrilla militia, Suhadi Sadono, has devised a plan to preserve his own life by planting scattered smallpox carriers around the world, to be released in the event of his death. It's up to the US Military, returning hero Sam Fisher and a number of new NSA operatives to subvert the diabolical insurance policy and take out Suhadi, thus effectively decapitating the militia.

The game opens with the US installing a temporary military base in East Timor with the specific intention of training the defence force of the world's youngest democracy. Of course, this doesn't please Suhadi, who orders his men to attack and occupy the US Embassy in East Timor, taking dozens of civilian and military personnel hostage. Sam is sent into the Embassy, not to rescue the hostages but to covertly destroy top-secret information before it is discovered by Suhadi's soldiers.

From there the game travels around the world to several different locations, from a moonlit train ride in France to the bustling street markets in Jerusalem, but it's not only Fisher who'll be racking up the frequent flyer points. Assisting Sam from various points across the globe are the new NSA operatives; the Shadownet teams.

The Shadownets are younger and much less experienced than Sam, but they possess a greater degree of physical manoeuvrability. For example, they can hang upside down from their legs from pipes and still target enemies. While you'll be controlling Sam exclusively during the single player campaign, you can also grab a friend and control the Shadownets via the game's all-new multiplayer mode.

The crucial Shadownet missions that will be referenced



OPS2 will be coming after you. Online



"Hide and seek" has never been so dangerous



EQUIPPING A SILENT KILLER

Take a sneak peak at just a handful of the guns, gadgets and gizmos on offer in Pandora Tomorrow ...



TAZER

The Tazer is new to the series and comes in handy for subduing any adversaries and is much quieter than using a bullet. It fires off a dart that lodges in your enemy's flesh and supplies an unhealthy dose of electricity to their bodies. Ouch.



MERCENARY RIFLE

Used by the mercenaries in the multiplayer mode, this bad boy carries more rounds of ammo than the SC-20K and fires at a much faster and more powerful rate.



FRAG GRENADE

It's a classic. This grenade is packed with hundreds of metal shards that explode out on impact, shredding anything in their path - Including human flesh.



SC-20K ASSAULT RIFLE

Sam's trusty assault rifle has had a bit of an overhaul since the first game, and consequently it's a bit bulkier in order to support a stack of new devices. This is the weapon used by the Shadownets in multiplayer.

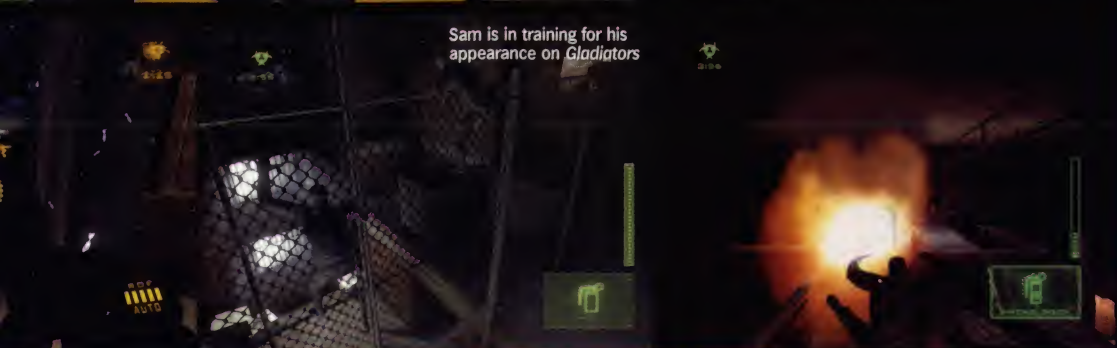


NOISE EMITTER

Load one of these babies into your SC-20K assault rifle and fire it into a wall or inanimate object. It will then emit random whistles and other noises, distracting guards and allowing you to slip past or creep up behind them ..



Sam is in training for his appearance on *Gladiators*



SAM NOW HAS A NIFTY SPIN MOVE THAT LETS HIM CROUCH DOWN AND SLIP PAST OPEN AREAS

via the cutscenes and mission briefings in the single player mode will be available to play online with up to three other players. So conceivably you won't be able to find out the entire story of *Pandora Tomorrow* without completing the single player campaign and then going online afterwards.

Teaching an old dog new tricks

Remember that split jump from the first game? It was great to impress your friends with, and it provided you with a stylish way to drop down and take out enemies, but how often did you actually use it? Maybe once in the training course, perhaps? Well fear not all you budding armchair gymnasts, because you'll be using it a heck of a lot more in *Pandora Tomorrow*, as Sam is a bit more flexible now. For example, while wedged between two walls Sam can now shift his weight between his right or left leg, allowing him to push off to leap up to ledges above. As well as this, Sam now has a nifty spin move that lets him crouch down and quickly slip past open areas, like doorways, and into the safety of the shadows.

The shadows also play a more integral part to the gameplay. The moving train level is one to look out for. During it you'll have to make use of the moving shadows to make your way along the outside of the carriages without being spotted by the guards and passengers inside.

Sam's various guns and gadgets have also been substantially overhauled. The standard silenced FN7 pistol from the original game has now been equipped with a handy laser sight for easier targeting. The catch is that using it means your targets have a good chance of noticing the red beam and spotting you before you take them out, so you've got to weigh up the improved accuracy versus the safety of camouflage. Of course you can never be 100 per cent safe in the shadows, as many of the guards now carry torches so you could suddenly find yourself in the spotlight.

Despite the developer's claims that *Pandora Tomorrow* will offer a slightly easier difficulty setting than the original game, it seems that a large amount of effort has gone into making the enemy AI a lot smarter and less forgiving. If an enemy spots you or one of their dead comrades then they

Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

PUTTING THE SMARTS INTO STEALTH

Any gamer that was turned off the original *Splinter Cell* because of its stiff difficulty level will be relieved to find that Ubisoft has remedied the situation in *Pandora Tomorrow* in a rather cunning way. So as not to alienate the hardcore fans by making it too easy, Ubisoft has implemented what it has dubbed 'ambient AI'. That means that *Pandora Tomorrow* will alter the challenges it offers to either go easy on beginners or to keep up with the experts. In addition to adjusting the difficulty, it will modify the events in the game so that they take place in slightly different parts or at slightly different times. It should provide some added replay value to the game, as each campaign will be different to the last.



"Shine the torch this way. I think there's some pizza over here"

will react and stay alarmed. If you continue to act suspiciously, by killing more guards, for example, they'll go and suit up in armoured flak jackets in order to take you on. If you're proving to be too much of a handful for them then they may even go as far as putting on helmets. They'll also be in a heightened state of awareness, thus making it even more difficult for you to get around unseen.

A Sea of Fishers

The online component of *Pandora Tomorrow* is the one new feature that has got us firing tranquilliser darts into our necks in an effort to suppress our burgeoning excitement. While Ubisoft is yet to confirm all the online details, what we do know is that *Pandora Tomorrow* will include a Shadownet Vs. Mercenaries mode. A maximum of four players divided into teams of spies and mercenaries can duke it out online in a battle to out-stealth one another. The team sizes will be fully customisable, so you'll be able to have three mercenaries against one spy or one mercenary against three spies and so on.

Mercenaries will play the online mode from a first-person perspective and have a lot more equipment to snuff out the spies with. They'll have torches, motion sensors, proximity mines, specialized vision modes and electroshock weaponry at their disposal. Shadownet agents on the other hand will be much the same as Sam in single player mode, only with extra acrobatics that will allow them to access hard-to-reach areas and perform jump kicks off walls, unlike the mercenaries who won't be able to climb or scale pipes.

The whole purpose of the online mode in *Pandora Tomorrow* is to provide players with an experience that is mostly identical to the single-player mode but with much more intelligent AI for the guards, as they will actually be controlled by living, breathing humans. This should provide the most edge-of-your-seat stealth experience yet. By removing the predictable walking routes from CPU controlled guards, it forces you to keep one eye on the guards at all times and the other on the computer terminal you're desperately trying to hack into.

While the limit of four players online would seem like a hindrance to other titles, Ubisoft claim that it was quite a deliberate decision to make it four-player only in order to maintain the tension that is unique to the *Splinter Cell* experience. The multiplayer levels will also be designed in a tight and claustrophobic manner to further enhance this tension, as you wouldn't really want to be forever losing


your prey if you were a mercenary simply because the environment was just too large. The confined playing area makes for some nail-biting confrontations; such as a spy grabbing a mercenary and using him/her as a human shield, whispering menacing taunts into his ear via the USB headset and allowing his fellow spy to continue the mission without interference from the other mercenary.

Tomorrow's graphics, today

It's obvious that Ubisoft has put a comparable amount of effort into the visuals and presentation of *Pandora Tomorrow* as it has put into the gameplay. While it still uses the same engine as the original, there's been many tweaks and improvements made in order to give the game a much more realistic appearance. The environments are more realistically cluttered and less sterile – the opening level features lush vegetation with grass that folds and reacts realistically to Sam's movements. The buildings and terrains are varied and Sam himself looks and moves even better than in the previous game, complete with a brand new camouflage suit. The lighting effects are as brilliant as ever and the textures offer a seemingly impossible level of detail.

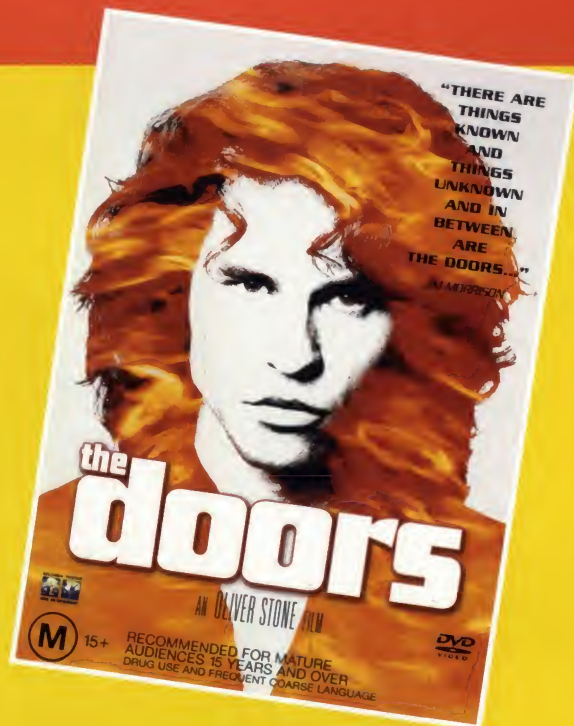
Sadly the soundtrack wasn't complete in the version OPS2 got its hands on, and as a result much of the voice acting is yet to be recorded. However, we did notice that one of the completed voices sounded very much like it belonged to Dennis Haysbert, famous for playing the President David Palmer in the popular television series, *24*. Expect many of the actors used in the original *Splinter Cell* to return in *Pandora Tomorrow*, along with an original musical score presented in Dolby Pro Logic II sound.

We can't help but get increasingly more and more excited with each hands-on we get with *Pandora Tomorrow*. While the new moves, improved graphics and smarter enemy AI will mean that fans of the original will have a ball with the single-player mode, it's undoubtedly the online multiplayer feature which will ensure that Ubisoft remains at the forefront of pioneering the stealth genre and pushing it in new and interesting directions.

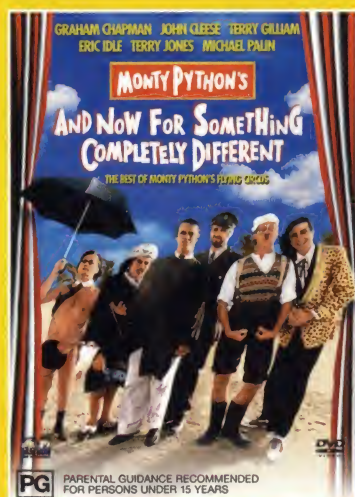
Provided that a balance is achieved between the mercenaries and spies so that neither is at a disadvantage, and the decision to restrict it to four players proves to be the right one, Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* will have a lot of trouble remaining in the shadows when it's released. This one's destined to be thrust right into the industry spotlight. 

The lighting effects remain as brilliant as ever

Pandora Tomorrow
ladder-climbing test



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BRING IT HOME. BRING IT ON.

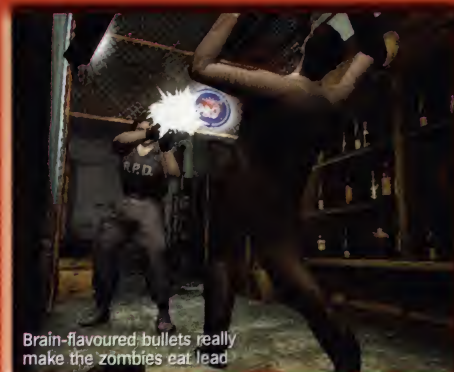


BACK FROM THE DEAD

**Online no one can hear you scream.
Resident Evil returns to PS2 ...**



The crowd at the midnight launch of Naval Ops: Warship Gunner grew anxious ...



Brain-flavoured bullets really make the zombies eat lead



After only one measly encore and no pyrotechnics, the Robbie Williams fans took their anger out into the streets

Resident Evil: Outbreak is set marginally before the beginning of *RE3*, on the evening of September 28th, 1998. The Umbrella Corporation has made a messy attempt to recover the G-Virus from Dr. William Birkin's secret lab. In the conflict between Birkin and the Umbrella mercenaries, samples of the T-Virus are smashed and seep through the sewers of Raccoon City. Sewer rats exposed to the virus spread it through the city with disturbing speed. Citizens grow mysteriously ill, and the crisis begins.

The main push for *Outbreak* was to create a far more suspenseful experience through relentless action. When you bring up your inventory, instead of pausing the game and cutting to a different screen, play continues and your items are shown in a transparent overlay over the action. So if you decide to rearrange your gear, or give the map some closer examination, it's strongly advised to make sure the coast is clear, or you could find yourself becoming some zombie's midnight snack.

OUTBREAK CREATES A FAR MORE SUSPENSEFUL EXPERIENCE THROUGH RELENTLESS ACTION

For those that have complained about the archaic 'push forward to go forward' *Resident Evil* controls (and haven't managed to grow accustomed to them after half a dozen games), they will be delighted to find that *RE: Outbreak* is the first *Resident Evil* game to feature analogue control using the left stick. Without doubt, this is a more intuitive control method, and makes the game far more accessible to those new to the survival horror genre. The 'classic' control method is available as well for those that prefer it, and is accessed by simply using the D-pad instead.



"C'mon - just one piggy-back ride!"



RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK



"Arrgh ... I've wasted my afterlife!"



"I wonder where the gate is?"

JUST BLAST THE DOOR OPEN WITH A SHOTGUN – NO MORE 'SWORD KEYS' OR 'EMBLEM CRESTS' REQUIRED IF YOU'RE PACKING HEAT

YOU CAN RUN...

What *Outbreak's* zombies lack in speed, they make up for in persistence. The new enemies make the relentless pursuits from the Nemesis in *RE3* look like Julie Andrews skipping through a field of daffodils. Most enemies in *REO* will give you no quarter, and chase you from room to room. While most are too stupid to open doors, they'll happily pound them off their hinges. In some locations, you can construct impromptu barricades with boards and crates to slow the progress of the undead. If you really want to be a martyr about it, you can actually press your weight against doors in a last ditch effort to keep the zombies out, and allow your friends to get away. You can even hide under the bed and let your buddies become zombie chow. No point getting yourself killed now, is there?



Anyone remember *Zombies Ate My Neighbours*? That game rocked!



→ Communication between characters, in single player or online, is done through a series of pre-set phrases. These include basic phrases like 'yes', 'no' and 'come here' as well as other character names and a situation dependant phrase that can give different responses. Capcom's decision to leave out voice communication in the online game is an interesting one as the element of ambiguity adds to the tension.

In another improvement to the series, players have more solutions to basic problems. For example, if you come across a locked door, the most obvious solution is to search the area frantically, and pray you find the key before packs of flesh-hungry zombies catch up with you. If Alyssa is in your party, jimmy the door open with her lock picks. Finally, with no other options and monsters at your heels, you can just blast the door open with a shotgun – no more 'sword keys' or 'emblem crests' required if you're packing heat.

GET AWAY FROM ME

Unlike the previous games, where you could fend off the effects of a zombie bite with a quick munch on some green herbs, there are more sinister concerns now. Whenever any infected creature attacks you, you are exposed to the T-Virus. Treating the wounds will slow the rate of infection, but not cure the virus. With the passage of time, the virus spreads through your character's immune system. This imposes an indirect time limit to play, and gives a real sense of urgency to get through each scenario.

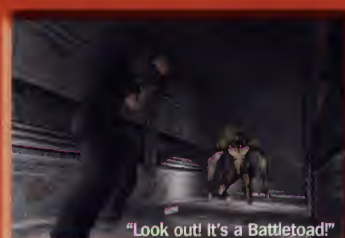
In the single player game, reaching one hundred percent infection simply means that you are overwhelmed by the virus, and die a horrible, feverish death. Game over. Playing the online game, on the other hand, also means you die a horrible, feverish death – it's what happens after that makes the difference. After collapsing in a heap, shortly thereafter your virulent corpse lurches up from the ground and you can pursue your former allies as the living dead! It's the ultimate revenge for those times that your teammates let you down at that critical moment.

THE END IS NIGH!

Resident Evil: Outbreak represents an evolution in the survival horror genre. Capcom has collated the refinements from the previous games, added more innovation and put the emphasis on white-knuckled action. With a conclusive single player game with truckloads of replay value, and intense online play options, it's a *Resident Evil* fan's dream come true. Hordes of survival horror gamers will be roaming the streets to get their hands on this one.



"Oh don't let the giant eye worry you, he always stares at strangers"



"Look out! It's a Battletoad!"

HELP ME!, HELP ME, PLEASE

You take control of one of eight of a cast of everyday residents of Raccoon City. Thrown together by the unforeseen crisis, these eight must work together to survive through the night. Each has their own skills to make playing with them significantly different.



KEVIN RYMAN

AGE: 31

OCCUPATION: RPD Police Officer

Somewhat reminiscent of Leon S. Kennedy from RE2, but Kevin's a lot more laidback and doesn't take everything as seriously. Kevin has ambitions to join the S.T.A.R.S. Team, but has applied unsuccessfully several times.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Kevin's police training allows him to fend off zombies with a well-placed kick. Excellent for giving yourself a little more breathing room. Extensive firearm training has given Kevin very precise aim. Hold down the aim button longer to fire shots that do double damage. Kevin starts the game with a .45 Magnum.



CINDY LENNOX

AGE: 24

OCCUPATION: Waitress

Cindy makes a living as a waitress working in Jack's Bar in central Raccoon City. Unwittingly caught up in the chaos, she draws on all her strength to survive.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Cindy's small frame and agility mean that she can dodge out of the way of enemy attacks. She carries a satchel for storing herbs. It can hold up to three of each type, as well as one lot of mixed herbs. Cindy can use the healing in her inventory on other players, as well as on herself.



MARK WILKINS

AGE: 52

OCCUPATION: Security Guard

Mark has been working in the security industry for years. While grabbing a bite to eat with his long-time co-worker, Bob, Mark notices that Bob has grown deathly ill all of a sudden. As hell breaks loose, Mark vows to save his friend.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Trained in the martial arts, Mark can block physical attacks to avoid damage. Mark's large frame means he deals more damage in melee combat than the other characters. Mark starts the game with a 9mm Beretta pistol.



ALYSSA ASHCROFT

AGE: 28

OCCUPATION: Reporter

A hard-hitting reporter looking for the scoop on the Umbrella Corporation who found more than she bargained for. Somewhat of a wild child in her younger days, the things she learnt in her 'misspent youth' will come in handy in this time of uncertainty.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Alyssa's self defence training allows her to avoid enemy attacks with an elusive back step. Having spent significant time on a firing range, Alyssa is a crack shot with a handgun. Alyssa keeps a set of lock picks with her at all times, for opening locked doors.



DAVID KING

AGE: Unknown

OCCUPATION: Plumber

A dark horse with not much to say. David doesn't seem to be too concerned about the zombie plague. Could this mean that he knew that it was coming? Has he seen terrors like this before?

SPECIAL ABILITIES: In an emergency, David can throw spanners off his tool belt to provide distraction and a mild concussion to enemies. Using his handyman skills, David can fashion weapons out of everyday items. David's tool belt also contains a screwdriver, which can be used as a stabbing weapon in a pinch.



GEORGE HAMILTON

AGE: 39

OCCUPATION: Doctor

George has hit a bit of a rough patch in his life, and has recently gone through a divorce. His association with Raccoon University means he has strong links into Biotechnology research. The recent virus outbreak has changed his perception on life completely.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: From his college football days, George still has a stiff shoulder tackle. He can use it even when he has a weapon equipped. George carries a pharmaceutical kit, which he can use to make medicines from the variety of herbs.



JIM CHAPMAN

AGE: 24

OCCUPATION: Subway Attendant

The latest turn of events have left Jim at his wit's end. While he generally has a good mind for puzzles, the zombie invasion has him in a panic and not sure what to do.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Using the old 'play possum' trick, Jim can lie down and pretend to be dead to avoid dangerous creatures. Jim has a lucky coin. If he flips it, it can occasionally bring him good fortune.



YOKO SUZUKI

AGE: 20

OCCUPATION: Student

Yoko went through a traumatic experience a couple of years ago, and can't remember much of her past. Currently studying at Raccoon University, Yoko was supposed to meet her new boyfriend at Jack's Bar this evening. He never made it...

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Like Jim, Yoko can pretend to be dead to fool monsters into leaving her alone. Yoko carries a backpack, which allows her to carry more items.



ZOMBIE

AGE: Unknown

OCCUPATION: Being undead

You better take care of your friends, otherwise they might end up looking a bit like this. Plus they'll groan non-stop about how much they want to eat brains, and it will be a nightmare to get them past the bouncer at your favourite nightclub.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Zombies can't run, but they can certainly absorb a lot of bullets. For some reason, they also seem to really enjoy Burgo's Catchphrase. Weird...



TURN ON, TUNE IN, POP OUT

The days of singing into your hairbrush are over. Yup, it's time to retire that baby and get yourself *Sing Star!*

WORDS: MIKEY FOLEY



Sunset Crib

25 Sundown Boulevard
Bay City Heights

● If you're not the one
World of our own
Scandalous



+ choose activity
personal organizer

NAVIGATE INFO SELECT BACK

ON THE WAILING LIST

While Sony is still frantically working away, trying to pack as many songs into the Sing Star catalogue as humanly possible, we're only able to confirm just a taste of the tracks for you. You see, at the time of going to press only some of the tracks have been officially confirmed, so OPS2 can only give you a taster of what's to come. We can assure you however, that Sing Star's selection is undoubtedly impressive and when released, will satisfy the whole gamut of musical tastes. Sony says that the song choice will "guarantee fun". Apart from the disc you'll receive when Sing Star is launched, it's likely that more discs from different genres and eras will be available down the track. Here are just some of the songs that have been confirmed so far:

Never Gonna Give You Up – Rick Astley
Ace of Spades – Motorhead
Like a Virgin – Madonna
Ain't No Sunshine – Bill Withers
Careless Whisper – George Michael
Suspicious Minds – Elvis Presley
Kung Fu Fighting – Carl Douglas
Take On Me – A-ha
Pretty Woman – Roy Orbison
World of Our Own – Westlife
Get This Party Started – Pink
Thank You – Dido
Livin La Vida Loca – Ricky Martin
Complicated – Avril Lavigne
Just a little – Liberty X



LOOK MUM, I'M ON TV.

If you're lucky enough to own the excellent Eye Toy you can link it up with Sing Star to make sure that you're the star of the show. Now you get your own face appearing where the music videos usually play. Of course whether this is a good or bad thing depends upon just how contorted your face becomes as you try to convince the audience you really are George Michael. Just like catching a glimpse of your own mug in the throes of passion, discovering that you look like a constipated orangutan and not Avril Lavigne is probably best left unseen.



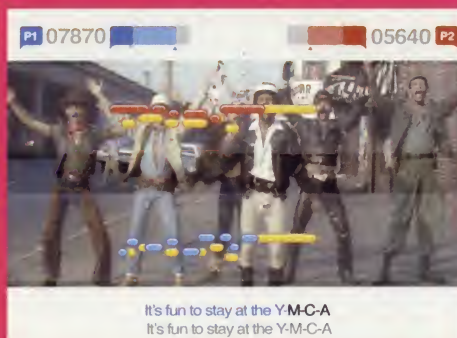
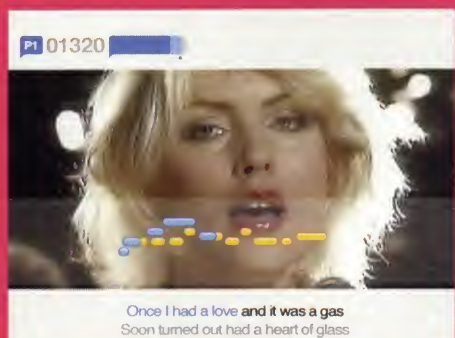
If you thought leaping around on a dance mat in a spaztastic display of limb flinging was the most entertaining and embarrassing group experience on PS2, think again. It's time to don an out-of-control afro, croon into a microphone and call yourself Guy Sebastian. Following up the Twister-esque dance mat and the totally bonkers Eye Toy, Sony is poised to unleash a pair of seemingly innocent microphones that will completely transform your social life. Nights in with the mates will never be the same again, all thanks to the wonder of Sing Star.

Featuring two very clever microphones that read your dulcet tones and rate the accuracy of your bawling, Sing Star brings out the pop idol in all of us and takes the karaoke "experience" to soaring new heights. All of a sudden getting the lyrics right is the least of your worries. Getting each note absolutely spot-on and trying not to shatter every piece of glass in the place is where the challenge is at. However, the real stars of the show are the songs.

Sing Star features a track listing that makes Amplitude hold its head in shame, Dancing Stage Magamix stand in the corner with a dunce's hat on and GTA: Vice City worriedly look over its shoulder. Now you get to be Pink getting the party started and Madonna trying to be like a virgin. Slap on some fake boobs and eyeliner and you're there. Just don't expect the crowd to show much love and/or adulation!

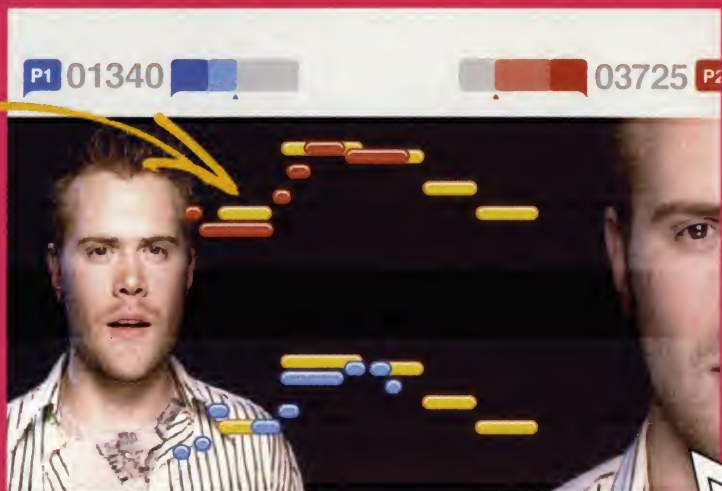
The real beauty of Sing Star is all about making a complete twit of yourself in front of your so-called mates. Heckling, jeering and laughing until your Pepsi starts pouring out of your nose is all part of the fun. It's also not very long before you'll discover that wearing next to nothing and covering herself in mud isn't just what makes Ms Aguilera so popular. Hitting the right notes is nowhere near as easy as you might think from watching pop stars miming to their hits on the box, and Sing Star revels in plastering your pathetic attempts at being the new Rick Astley right across your TV screen. No problem. If you're never going to be the sixth member of Duran Duran just crank up a bit of hard-rockin' Motorhead and no one will be able to tell if your yelling is spot on or not.

The best thing about Sing Star is that there's no hand-eye coordination required, or knowledge of what the hell a PlayStation 2 is. You don't even need to touch a joystick to play. This means that dexterously challenged dads, uncoordinated mums and grandparents still droning on about the wonder of the gramophone can all get involved. Why else do you think Elvis Presley and Roy Orbison have been included? Forget jabbering into headsets to tell some faceless Yank to take out that other faceless Brit in SOCOM. Sing Star is what communal gaming is all about. This could well be the most entertaining group experience of 2004 and you don't even need to take your clothes off.



GOOD VIBRATIONS

These lines represent the pitch of each note. The higher it appears the more in danger your mum's treasured crystal collection becomes. Only budding Mariah Careys need apply. Lower down the scale is where the real men excel. Wannabe Barry Whites will have the foundations shaking with a manhood reaffirming bellow on that deep bottom line!



ORGY OF NOISE

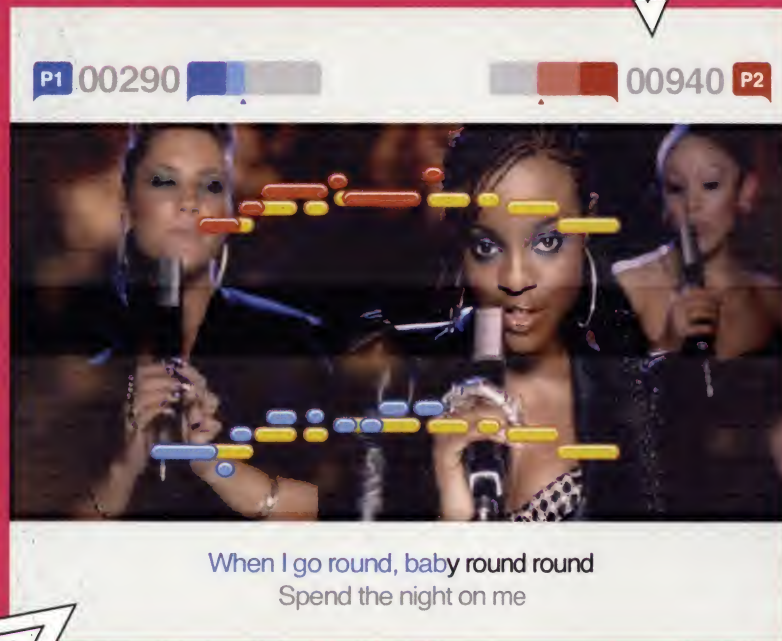
Getting the mates around is where the real fun can be had with *Sing Star*. A number of multiplayer modes have been included so that you can recreate that Britney-Christina catfight rivalry.

Duel is where the competition is at its fiercest with two players singing at the same time and their icons and scores appearing simultaneously, forcing each player to push their vocal talents to the absolute limit. If your eardrums just can't take the pain of two tone-deaf yellers screaming at the top of their lungs you can always try to be the next Kylie and Jason (remember "Especially For You"?), Sonny and Cher or Renee and Renato by creating sweet music in the more sedate Duet mode.

IT'S ROCK 'N' ROLL BABY!

Life for a rock star was simple in the old days. You did your gig, picked up a few groupies, drank the bar dry, threw a TV through the window and wondered what planet you'd landed on the next morning. Nowadays it's a different ball game. Hangovers? Nah, they're all into yoga, moisturiser, poodles and manicures nowadays. Then the spilt things stomp off stage early because you couldn't feel the crowd's love, getting drunk and marrying a complete stranger and then inviting a bunch of kids over to yours for a sleepover. Now that's rock 'n' roll in the warped 21st century!

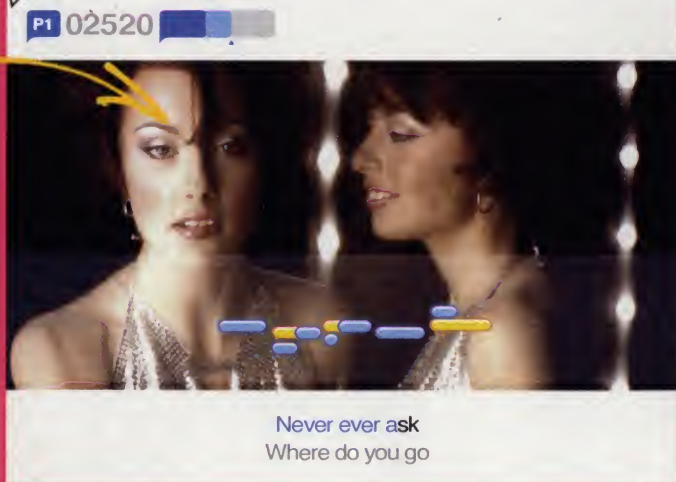
TONE IDOL



Each performance is evaluated on pitch, tone and rhythm. If you sing a song perfectly your coloured icons should overlap the yellow guide icons. The more accurate your wailing the more points you'll score. Get the pitch wrong and your icons will appear above or below the guideline letting you know that you need to raise or lower your pitch. Rhythm is depicted by the breaks between each icon. If you see one dauntingly lengthy continuous line that seems to go forever it's time to break out the oxygen masks for one long lung-bursting note, or just get an opera singer to take over. Following the words at the bottom and getting your icons to match those on screen is the difference between being a pop idol and Billy Idol. We've failed many a time ...

VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR

This area of the screen is used to display the actual pop video of the song that you're murdering. This means that you get to see Rick Astley showing us why he was a singer and not a dancer, A-ha's comic book classic and Ricky Martin shaking his latino bon-bon all over your TV screen. Seriously, the addition of the real-life film clips are a real feature and anyone around in these eras will love being transported back to yesteryear time and again.



TOP OF THE POPS

Even when your neighbours have moved out, your friends refuse to visit and the cockroaches have left for a quieter neighbourhood you can continue to make an ear-busting racket with the solo career mode. Starting out as a wannabe pop star you're offered the chance to stretch those vocal chords in local clubs and bars. Put on a good show and you might just find yourself invited to trendier nightspots and eventually tie up that lucrative recording contract. The game mode takes the form of a city map with you crooning from place to place trying to beat the required score for each performance and build up a reputation for yourself. Stripping for *Playboy*, marrying the boss of the record company, snogging some sports star or throwing up in the back of a limo sadly won't help to boost your score.

THE HIT SEQUEL BY
AWARD WINNING BLACK ISLE STUDIOS

FORGOTTEN REALMS

Baldur's Gate

DARK ALLIANCE III



5 NEW HEROES!

- Hack your way or cast powerful spells through over 80 perilous levels
- Hidden areas, secret characters, and hundreds of items
- Forge unique magical weapons and armor to maximise the damage you inflict in battle
- Single or two-player modes of play



PlayStation 2

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THE

SECOND COMING

V8 Supercars, the holy grail of car racing is finally returning



OPS2 recently met up with Matt White, lead games designer of *V8 Supercars 2* at Codemasters HQ in England. Impressively, the team is absolutely dedicated to replicating our beloved V8 Supercars series, despite being on the other side of the world. And the game is still in its very early stages!

Official PlayStation 2 Magazine: Did you base most changes on what gamers had requested or what the team felt needed to be changed?

Matt White: It's a mixture of both really. With any team, whenever you finish a game you're never going to be quite happy with what you've just done, so you can always build on that. Also, we have our own Codemasters forums that we take very seriously. *V8* fans can log onto the forum and we'll have a look at what they say. We'll use that, along with our own judgement on how to improve things and what should be changed. I think it's a good mix and we're always really keen to hear what videogames fans have to say about our games. We're the most critical people of the project though.

OPS2: But what did you find was the most overwhelming element that people wanted changed?

MW: Damage. To have terminal car damage so that you can totally destroy the thing and the impact that that would have on the game. The variety and types

of car damage that you could have ... The reason that no one ever really does it is that it's an incredibly complex thing to do. A close second would be the physics.

OPS2: Is the physics more complex than the original's?

MW: Oh, gosh yeah! [laughs]. As soon as we finished the first one, our physics programmers started re-working the whole thing. We totally scrapped the last physics engine. The objective of it was to produce something that was incredibly realistic that also allowed us to have a lot of car types. So we had to be able to have a flexible physics engine that we could use for a heavy touring car to a very light open-wheeled car – they have to be very different.

OPS2: Was it the same team who worked on both games?

MW: The team is over 40 people. This includes a good proportion of those worked on the original and some who have a lot of experience working on racing games. We made sure that we brought in some fresh ideas and new concepts forward though. So, it's a good mix of people who've worked on various games. We're always keen on new ideas and new approaches.

OPS2: You seem very familiar with V8 series ...

MW: It is difficult. We're quite fortunate in that there are a few people on the team who are big motor racing fans. We've got people who have come to the team who are real F1 fans or V8 fans or touring car fans, so you have to get up to speed with all the different types of racing pretty quickly. We have videos running all day long with all the different types of racing. We're very familiar with V8s! Where possible we've been out to the tracks and environments

THE SPECS: WHAT WE KNOW

NAME: V8 SUPERCARS 2
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
CARS: 80+ (ROUGHLY TWICE THAT OF THE ORIGINAL)
TRACKS: 58 (ROUGHLY 20 MORE THAN THE ORIGINAL)
NEW ADDITIONS: TRUCKS, OPEN-WHEELERS, CLASSICS/HOT RODS AND (ALMOST CERTAINLY) HRT.
RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2004
ONLINE: YES





"THE OBJECTIVE OF IT WAS TO PRODUCE SOMETHING THAT WAS INCREDIBLY REALISTIC" – MATT WHITE

racing; we've talked to the drivers and a few of us actually race cars ourselves.

OPS2: Have you visited Australia to see a race first-hand?

MW: Quite a few of the team have been out to Australia. We definitely encourage as much first-hand experience as possible. Until you've been to a race and stood there and smelled it ... that's what motor racing is all about. That's what we want to capture. Especially with the V8s, we spend a lot of time doing the research into the tracks, the cars ...

OPS2: How helpful has AVESCO (the V8 Supercars series' governing body) been?

MW: We've got a really good relationship with AVESCO. As soon as a question comes up about if we can tune a car this way or that or whatever, we are talking to AVESCO.

We run everything past their teams. With Codemasters' history of racing games, we've always had a great relationship with a lot of car manufacturers and people in the motor racing industry.

We'll send AVESCO code for them to approve. All of the licensed content in the game must be approved by the content holder.

If we're tuning a car and just want to change its ride height or if we want the

player to be able to do that, we talk to AVESCO. They have given us a really good lowdown on the system that they have put down in place for the series.

OPS2: The inclusion of trucks and older cars – was that something that gamers specifically asked for?

MW: Well, with a lot of racing games, you might not just want to buy a game that only has, say, Formula 1 type racing or just has Super Truck racing. With the range of racing types that we've got, it allows them to appreciate the different types of handling that are in the game. If you're using a Jaguar E-type from the '60s and you're racing an unreleased Aston Martin you'll soon see that the two are totally different. It also allows us to include these cars, that most of us unfortunately, will never be able to buy!

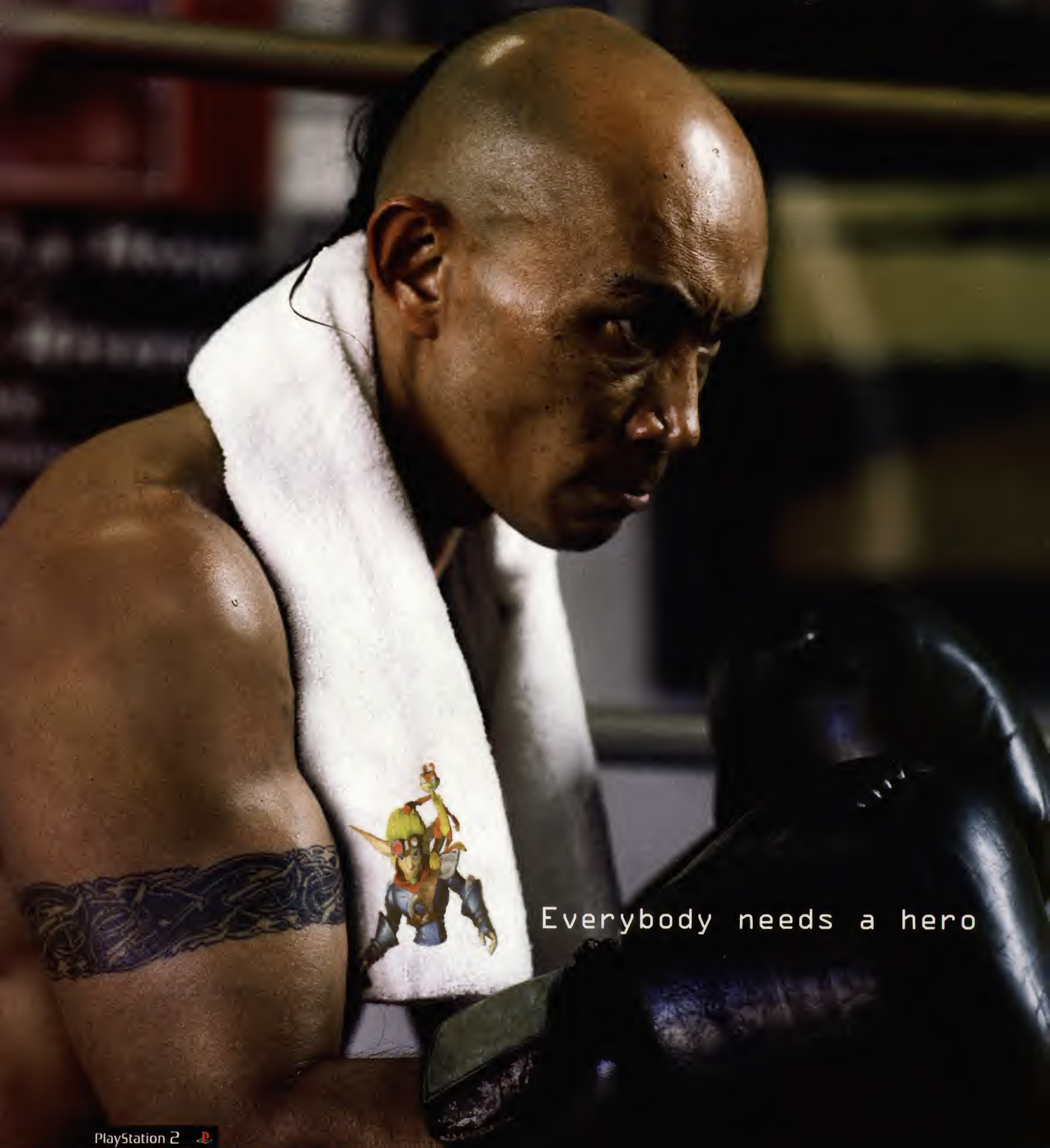
OPS2: How will the unlicensed elements be presented?

MW: We've created our own version of the F1 car that has the same handling and system as an F1 car. The only three licences that we don't have in the game are F1, Indy and Nascar. F1 will be called Grand Prix, the single seat open-wheeler 1000 will be our Indy car and we have our Kennedy stock car that will be the same as a Nascar. The tracks are based on realistic tracks and they are given a very realistic flavour. Everything else in the game is licensed.

OPS2: Can Holden fans expect the HRT in the game?

MW: It's something that we are very actively pursuing. I'd love to see HRT on the front of the game and I've said that from day one. We're very keen and very excited about the possibility of that. 🐣





Everybody needs a hero

PlayStation 2



If you prefer your heroes tough then get ready, because Jak's back. Armed with all-new weapons and one bad attitude, he'll stop at nothing to get revenge. More evolved than the original, Jak II: Renegade has enhanced gameplay and even bigger worlds to explore, in an experience so intense it's been rated "10/10 - best platform game ever" by Official PlayStation Magazine.

NAUGHTY DOG

www.jak2renegade.com



fun, anyone?
PlayStation 2

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PLAY-TEST

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  **Champion**

REVIEW CHARTER

FACT: OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE's reviews are the best in the business. Our crack squad of reviewers play the games longer, harder and better than anyone else. And we absolutely love what we do.

It's this dedication that means you can trust our scores above anyone else's. Whether a game's superb or sewage, our experts will tell it like it is with buckets of opinion rather than a few cheap gags and some PR nonsense. Our experienced reviewers have written for the game industry's most revered publications, both here and overseas. What's more, our writers have plenty of 'heritage' in the industry, having a collective history spanning into decades. Rest assured that these are opinions you can trust.

Next time you head off to spend your hard-earned cash on a PlayStation 2 game, make sure you read our reviews first.

REVIEW RATINGS

HERE'S WHAT OUR REVIEW SCORES STAND FOR:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. If you have a PlayStation 2, you need this now
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's definitely well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and ideal for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer mat

THE OPS2 AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

DVD / MUSIC / MEDIA
media

DVD RELEASES080

Office Space/Bad Boys II/The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen/Knight Rider Collection



SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS050

The PS2's premier stealth game just got better. Read how!

RAINBOW SIX 3054

It's name sure looks funny. But what's sequel play like?

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU058

When it comes to platformers, we're already spoilt for choice. Here's another one to add to the mix!

SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON060

We know plenty of you have been looking forward to this one. Find out if it's been worth it ...

- 062 SPHINX
- 064 DOWNHILL DOMINATION
- 065 GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM
- 066 MAFIA
- 068 ROGUE OPS
- 070 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
- 072 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
- 074 MIDWAY'S ARCADE CLASSICS
- 074 FLIPNIC
- 076 NFL STREET
- 076 NBA LIVE 2004



It takes a little more to make a



Players will love the
grenade attachments
to some of the rifles



There is a greater variety of
single player mission types



Game screens are packed
with information

SOCOM 2: US NAVY SEALS

The best of the best just got better

PUBLISHER:
SONY COMPUTER
ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
DEVELOPER:
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
PRICE: \$99.95 OR \$139.95
WITH USB HEADSET
PLAYERS: 1-16
OUT: 12TH MARCH
WEBSITE:
[HTTP://AU.PLAYSTATION.COM](http://au.playstation.com)
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES

■ BACK STORY

SOCOM: U.S. Navy Seals was Sony Computer Entertainment America's spearhead for online gaming into the lounge rooms of gamers worldwide. The PS2's first taste of an online shooter was a spectacular one. After the resounding success, developer Zipper Interactive was sent straight back into the development labs to better their previous effort.



SOCOM II's new and improved single player game follows the SEALs through a total of 12 missions in four theatres - Albania, Brazil, Algeria and Russia. Your missions include breaking up an international drug cartel, conducting recon on black market smuggling rings and defending a U.S. embassy under siege by extremists.

The varied environments provide a good mix of combat, from sniping, head-to-head firefights and good ol' stealth kills. For the most part your team will be operating in open countryside but the Brazil levels in particular, provide an interesting urban variation. Freewheeling through the slums of Rio De Janeiro in heated battle provides a welcome change from peeking out of the thicket at patrolling guards. Your objectives are par for the course, encompassing demolitions, intelligence recon, capturing terrorist cell leaders for interrogation, rescuing hostages and disarming bombs.

As in the original, the on-screen HUD provides all the information you require at a glance. It shows your individual team member's condition as well as their orders. Your current weapon is also displayed, with ammo and the selected fire mode, so there are no questions about the result you get when you pull the trigger. The mini-map/radar shows a remarkable amount of information, including directions to your next objective, position of teammates, waypoints and any direct threats.

The assortment of weaponry has expanded since the last outing. The arsenal of assault rifles, sub-machine guns and sniper rifles has filled out somewhat, but without affecting the gameplay significantly. A range of

shotguns, both pump-action and full auto are available, providing a lethal stopping force in close quarters. Claymore anti-personnel mines make a debut, but they're largely useless in the single player game and serve to blow up just as many of your teammates as they do enemies in multiplayer combat. Grenade launcher attachments for some of the assault rifles have made the transition over to multiplayer, and provide an excellent, faster alternative for delivering ordinance. The meaty OICW rocket launcher beefs up the firepower for the later missions, but is sadly unavailable for online play.

One of the first things you notice about *SOCOM II* is the new lighting effects. The lighting doesn't just cast shadows anymore, but you're also afforded a sense of glare. This gives the outdoor areas a very organic feel, even if it doesn't lead to any tactical significance. There's a massive increase in the amount of trees, foliage and structures in the environment.

When you switch to a first-person perspective and watch your foes disappear between tufts of long scrub as your sight trembles with every breath, it's hard not to get absorbed by the experience. Sadly, the illusion fades when you move laterally, as most of the grasses are simple textured polygons. In the more urban environments, however, a great deal of the structural and vehicle textures are very impressive.

On the performance side, the amount of landscape the PS2 is throwing around can often make for a sometimes average frame rate. Add a firefight with eight or so combatants into the equation, and things start to chug a little. It's all a bit disappointing, especially when



BRONZE
PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AUSTRALIA

U.S. NAVY SEALS

The U.S. Navy SEALs get their name from the three environments that they do battle in - Sea, Air and Land. Everyone that thought that the name came from their appearance in full SCUBA gear, or propensity for leaping through hoops at Sea World - give yourself a dozen. Seriously. And while they're meant to be hard nuts, word is that our very own SAS would eat 'em up!



Nope, this isn't "Serenade your Girlfriend" mode!

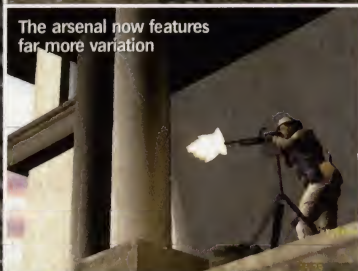


It takes a little more to make a

There are more buildings and foliage in *SOCOM II*



The arsenal now features far more variation



→ you can notice fog in the more open outdoor locations.

On the other hand, with this level of detail being thrown around, it wasn't going to be as silky smooth as a more run-and-gun shooter like *Timesplitters 2*, but a happy medium would have been nice. While it doesn't spoil the experience, it's definitely a notable detractor.

SIR! YES, SIR!

This time around, the AI has been taken up a notch, for both the SEALs and the terrorists. Zipper have also written your old comrade, Boomer, out of the storyline, as being 'wounded in action'. Your fireteam follow your actions religiously, hitting the deck when you do, and following you precisely at a similar speed.

Your new partner, Jester, does need to remain close at all times, but he's a lot more subtle when behind enemy lines. The only real flaw with your teammates is that they haven't quite figured out how to descend ladders. They climb up them fine, but instead of going for a ladder slide to get down, your comrades opt to take the quick way and jump, usually resulting in significant damage. Not exactly the behaviour you'd expect from crack troops.

The fireteam are a particularly potent force, and when used properly make your missions much easier. After a couple of missions, you soon realise that the game is not just a first-person shooter, but more about commanding your SEAL team. The *SOCOM II* voice command system is the perfect way to control your squad, and watching your character using official military gestures and hearing your team respond through the earpiece adds another level of immersion. Sure, the same functions can be achieved through

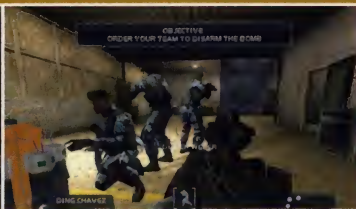
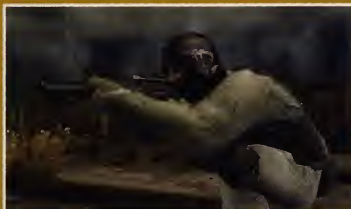
THE FIRETEAM ARE A POTENT FORCE AND MAKE YOUR MISSIONS MUCH EASIER

controller commands, but you're really only getting half the experience that way. It's strongly recommended to shell out the extra 40 beans and get the headset bundle if you haven't already. Aside from the ramifications for single players, it makes playing online more enjoyable and cohesive.

Terrorists do start in and patrol the same areas, but they do have a knack for using cover and concealment. At the first sign of attack, they scramble for cover first, and then seek out the intruder relentlessly. When alerted to your presence by their comrades, enemy

SOCOM II VS RAINBOW SIX 3

With the two games released in such quick succession and with such a similar theme, it was natural that they'd stir up more arguments than the perennial Ford Vs Holden debate at the Bathurst 1000. The lads at OPS2 have been giving the duo a thorough workout, and here's our 411 on how they both stack up.



WEAPONS: While some of *SOCOM*'s weapons may be a bit samey, it does have a broad range of hardware. *Rainbow Six 3* can't say the same.

SINGLE PLAYER: Each game offers around a dozen single player missions, allowing you to command a team of four highly trained anti-terrorist agents. Both games are of equal merit.

GRAPHICS: While *Rainbow Six 3* does utilise the same engine used in *Splinter Cell*, its visuals pale in comparison to the sheer detail and effects that *SOCOM II* churns out.

SOUND: Both features Dolby Pro Logic 2 support, multilingual voiceovers and an assortment of authentic weapon sounds and orchestral music. A draw.

VOICE: Each features voice support for online play and the ability to command your troops with verbal commands. Another dead heat.

GAME MODES: *SOCOM II* has five game modes playable online or via LAN, and *Rainbow Six 3*

with three online modes and two split-screen. Provided you have a Broadband Adaptor, you'd have to award this one to *SOCOM II*.

MAPS: *SOCOM II* has an impressive total of 22 expansive levels, while *Rainbow Six 3* only musters up 14 odd, mainly linear levels. *SOCOM II* wins here by a country mile.

ONLINE PLAY: The sheer variety provided with *SOCOM* overbears the relatively meagre online package in *Rainbow Six 3*. The fact that *SOCOM II* supports 16 players to *Rainbow Six 3*'s six is just the nail in the coffin.

LATENCY: Each game performed admirably, without a hint of lag. Unfortunately, we played on test servers set up prior to release without too many players on at any given time. There may be a more notable difference when the servers are under more stress, but that remains to be seen.

OVERALL: As you can ascertain, *SOCOM II* is the clear victor in the comparison and stronger when comparing the multiplayer aspects.

With more buildings, there is also a greater use of height



Your squad will follow your commands religiously



YOU LITTLE ZIPPER!

Zipper Interactive was founded by two men, Jim Bosler and Brian Soderberg back in 1995. Before the sublime success of *SOCOM*, the Zipper Interactive team worked mainly on PC titles like *Crimson Skies*, *Mechwarrior 3*, *Top Gun* and *Recoil*. Several of their staff previously worked on SIMNET, a training program used by the U.S. Military and NATO to simulate situations troops would experience in the field. This explains why they have such a knack for military simulations.



The Zipper team are based in Seattle, USA.

	BETTER THAN:
	SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS
	WORSE THAN:
	METAL GEAR SOLID 2
	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	Extensive multiplayer options. Up for a game?
	What they need to fix:
	The game has, at times, a very average frame rate

forces will even set ambushes, working together, rather than acting as individuals. Particularly on the higher difficulty, this makes you use the stealth approach, as strongarm tactics will just get you slaughtered.

You will occasionally get sleepy guards that will pay no heed as his buddy goes charging around the corner, spraying full auto from his AK-47. Thankfully, it's a fairly uncommon occurrence. You'll also stumble upon terrorists having a conversation, and you come to realise that a great deal of them are simply desperate men driven to become mercenaries to support themselves in a war-torn land. It's this human element that's unusual for a game of this type. Just don't be surprised if you get a lump in your throat when you realise you start developing a sense of remorse...

TIGHT AS AN ESKIMO'S

The controls in *SOCOM II* are still one of its greatest merits and they go a long way to explaining the runaway success of the game. It's all too easy for a first-person shooter to have slippery control, with large dead zones in the analogue movement that make moving and aiming at the same time more of a chore than it needs to be.

Not so for this series. As before, Zipper has kept the controls tighter than a Scotsman in an antique store. Not only are you totally in control of your movement, but all secondary controls are within easy reach at all times. Having separate buttons for switching between primary and secondary weapons means you've got the firepower you need on tap. The only downfall is that switching to your other gear, like grenades, is more problematic. Still, with a little forward planning and practice, it soon comes naturally.

The Dolby Surround sound manages to convey an incredible sense of depth as well as direction. It allows you to develop a sense of distance and react accordingly when you hear approaching guards or gunfire. In the background, a moody symphony backs your stealthier moments, arcing up into more dramatic tones when significant threats come into the picture. The music more simmers in your subconscious, adding to, but not interfering with the way the game unfolds.

In the end, the sad fact is that there's not a great deal of variety in your objectives in the single player missions, and towards the end of the game, you start to develop a sense of déjà vu.

With some of the later missions taking the better part

of an hour to get through, and only being able to save between missions, you have to take the utmost care with certain objectives. One slip and you can throw a lot of hard work away and have to endeavour through the same arduous tasks over and over. There might be several difficulty levels to provide challenge to the veteran SEALs out there, but when the rewards are just a wider assortment of similar weapons for the single player game and a few different character models for online play, it's not a great incentive. Luckily enough, the shortfalls of the single player game are compensated for by the enhancements in the multiplayer game.

A CALL TO ARMS

The multiplayer game is an impressive improvement on last year's effort. The essence of longevity in any game is variety, and *SOCOM II* has it in spades. Alongside the obvious online support, you can also play via LAN. While the new play modes are somewhat similar to the carryover modes, they still provide an appreciable variation in gameplay. All 12 of the single player maps are playable, as well as the first *SOCOM* game's 10 maps, reworked and enhanced with the new machine gun nests set up. These little babies are excellent for setting up ambushes for rushing opponents, but make you a sitting duck if the enemy has snipers.

All of the balance issues that previously plagued the terrorist team have thankfully been ironed out, with each side having different, but equivalent arsenals. Even though the SEALs still have a slight edge when it comes to camouflage, it's less pronounced than before with the more muted terrorist wardrobe. The dreaded bright yellow raincoat that plagued the terrorist team on the oilrig level is now history.

For a less tense, more casual game, you even have the option of allowing players to respawn when killed, as opposed to having to sit out and watch until the next round begins. This is a much better way for newcomers to learn the game, rather than get frustrated waiting while veteran players wipe them out early on. By making the game more accessible, it means there's the potential for a larger player base, and plenty of opponents of all skill levels. Ultimately, that means that Network Gamers will be playing this one for some time.

For hardcore SEALs, the ladder system now includes ranks from Ensign to Admiral, so you can see at a glance the comparative skills of the other players. Games can also be set up to only allow specific ranks to join, so everyone can have an enjoyable game at their skill level. Full clan support is featured in *SOCOM II* and each player can sport clan tags for easy recognition.

Fans of *SOCOM* will be thrilled at the improvements, and would appreciate this top sequel. **Nick O'Shea**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

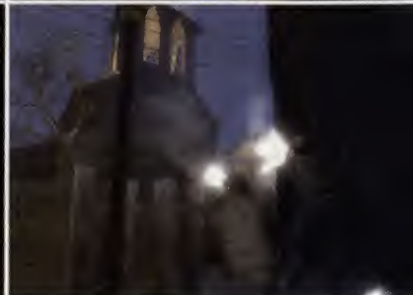
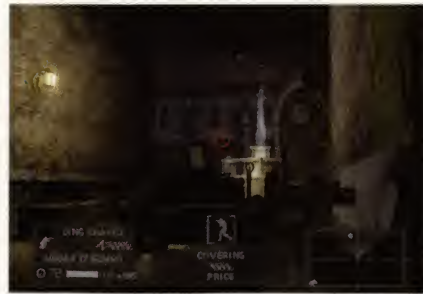
Graphics		Massive environments with extensive detail
Sound		A warzone recreated in Dolby Surround
Gameplay		Improved single-player AI, and online joy
Life span		Multiplayer game modes a go-go

Finally! This is it. The online sequel we all wanted.





The lighting conditions play a major role in the game



PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
PRICE: \$79.95
PLAYERS: 1-6
OUT: MARCH
WEBSITE: WWW.RAINBOWSIX3.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES
ONLINE: YES
PERIPHERALS: HEADSET

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

Been rejected by the Daffodil Four? There's still hope!

■ BACK STORY

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six series has been at the forefront of squad-based anti-terrorist action since the halcyon days of the PSone. With Rogue Spear under a healthy layer of dust in storage, Ubisoft has called out the big guns to see if they can still throw it down.



Set in the "near future", *Rainbow Six 3* shows the world on a political razor's edge. Diplomatic ties between the superpowers have broken down and most of the world's countries stand united in imposing an oil embargo on the US. Amidst this energy crisis, terrorist cells note the moment of weakness and take the opportunity to strike, causing even more chaos. Venezuela, the one country that still dares to trade freely with the US, gets dragged into the turmoil. To quell the spreading unrest, the U.N. is forced to once again call upon the top-secret organisation, Rainbow.

You slip into the webbing of one Domingo 'Ding' Chavez, veteran of the Rainbow organisation and are faced with the daunting task of spearheading the campaign aimed at stamping out the terrorist menace.

The single player campaign pits you against the terrorist forces in what's quickly becoming the usual gamut of bomb defusal, opposition neutralisation and hostage rescue. Being a global organisation, Rainbow will deploy you to go to the rescue in many locations including Croatia, Switzerland and of course, the USA.

Levels are linked by well-produced FMV cutscenes that convey the politically tense atmosphere brilliantly. This goes a long way towards making it feel like your

mission is an important part of the global crisis, rather than you just conducting a regulation scourging of a rebel militant faction.

The missions put your team into a range of varied environments including the snowy outskirts of a Stockholm village, the upper floors of a skyscraper in Quebec, a meat packing plant in Caracas and even the back alleys of New Orleans in the full swing of Mardi Gras. The majority of combat takes place indoors, usually consisting of clearing buildings room by room. The only complaint is you can really direct at level design, is that it makes using long range weapons like sniper rifles a bit pointless, as most combat takes place at close quarters or medium range.

One of the great strengths of *Rainbow Six 3*'s single player game is the large arsenal you have to outfit yourself with. Aside from the usual selection of pistols, submachine guns and assault rifles, there are also shotguns, sniper rifles and light machine guns. You can wield a veritable truckload of firearms from many different manufacturers that each feature different calibre ammunition, rates of fire, varied levels of scope zoom and other modifications like extended magazines and silencers. Add to this a range of grenades, grenade launchers and a selection of purpose-specific explosives,



The FMVs set up the intense atmosphere well



Jon Bon Jovi: shot down in a blaze of glory



⬆	BETTER THAN:
	SWAT: GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM
⬇	WORSE THAN:
	SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS

🎯	LAB TEST
✓	What they nailed this time:
	The accurate delivery of authentic capabilities and anti-terrorist tactics
✗	What they need to fix:
	Modest game options. Some added inclusions would have gone a long way here

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

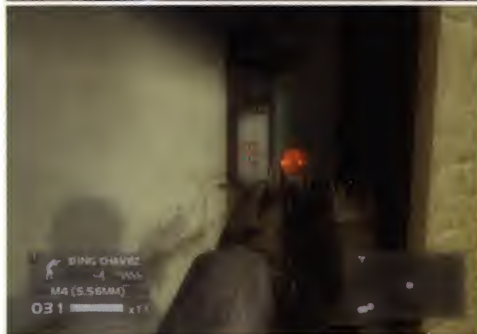
Look through lolly wrappers for your own night vision



After last year's security leak, the new *Australian Idol* HQ will now have extra armed staff on 24 hour duty



Alan ran out of Pea Beau so he got out his AK 47



The *Home and Away* cast finally got what they deserved



Firepower has been given a hefty boost. Need evidence?

and you've got a whole catalogue of kick ass.

Another of your weapons against the world's leagues of anarchists is technology. It seems that Rainbow Six standard issue includes Sam Fisher-esque goggles (think *Spinter Cell*) that permit both lowlight and thermographic vision.

Without goggles, your sight is readily affected by current lighting conditions. Switching to lowlight allows you to cut through the shadows, but bathes everything in green, making it difficult to discern objects (like heavily armed partisan warriors) against the background. Thermal vision is the opposite, with the terrorists' body heat making them stand out, but everything at room temperature is a blue blur. You can toggle through all three vision modes (including normal vision) with a single button press, and you'll often be switching between them to best suit the conditions.

Your three team members for the missions are Price, Loissele and Weber, from English, French and German backgrounds respectively. A bit of a token selection from a variety of backgrounds, but at least it makes it quite clear as to which character is speaking to you. Your fellow Rainbow Six operatives are excellent shots, and great for spotting wandering terrorists.

While you can readily command your team by issuing orders to have them clear rooms and areas, it's not nearly as satisfying as doing it yourself. After a while, using your teammates becomes more a case of balancing the exposure to risk, and essentially using them as bullet sponges to compliment your health.

Should your teammates fall in battle, they don't die, but rather become 'incapacitated' and are unable to continue on. After some patch-up medical attention behind the scenes, they are miraculously ready for active duty by the next mission.

BEST. GRENADE. EVER.

The M34 Incendiary Grenade. Upon detonation it delivers a payload up to 10-foot wide of white phosphorus that then ignites on contact with air. The question of, "is there anyone in this room?" can be readily answered by rolling one of these beauties in and waiting to see who comes running out screaming, enveloped in flames. You'd have to swear that munitions this fun should really need to be banned by the Geneva Convention.



The great innovation of *Rainbow Six 3* is the varied capacity to 'prep' a room for entry. You can now slowly ease doors open, rather than only having the option of popping them wide open immediately. By just making a crack in the door, you can peek into the room without alerting enemies, pop off a sneaky shot with your weapon, or lob in one of a variety of grenades. The five flavours of grenade are smoke, flash bang, tear gas, the phosphorus and classic explosive. This allows you to incapacitate or kill some of the foes you are about to face, and get through that portion of the mission with less resistance.

Still, you have to make your selection of munitions based on the situation. Turning hostage ambassadors into charred corpses is somewhat frowned upon by the top brass, so in that scenario, you'd need to opt for a non-lethal payload. Seamlessly hurling a flash bang into a room packed with terrorists and piling in to pick them off while they're still rubbing their eyes is enough to give any armchair gamer a combat high.

The terrorists you encounter really make you work hard to progress. These fellas are also pretty lethal shots and don't give second chances. Barging into rooms will soon leave you with more lead in you than the Staedler pencil factory. You learn very quickly to lean through doorways to minimise your exposure to incoming fire. Your best bet is to wait for them to reload, and take your

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

chances that they're not hurling a grenade in your direction. There are certain areas that enemies tend to occupy, but they can be located in a number of randomly allocated spots to keep you guessing. They're canny about taking cover and strategically retreating, and will occasionally return with reinforcements.

While the enemies are far from smacktards, like a lot of other games of the same vein, it sometimes seems like unsilenced gunshots just don't seem to carry far enough. You'll occasionally run into guards casually patrolling a reasonable distance from where you've had firefights with their comrades. You have to assume a part of it is a balance between a game where you can face challenging odds while you progress through a level, and one where you sneeze and get swamped with foes.

The multiplayer options available are a bit of a mixed bag. On a single PS2, you have a couple of co-operative options. The first is playing through the single player missions with the assistance of one other player in split-screen. You can also go on a 'Terrorist Hunt', which simply populates one of the game levels with randomly placed enemies, and to succeed you have to wipe them all out. While the single-system multiplayer options are reasonable, you are limited to two-player co-op. The inclusion of some four-player competitive modes could have injected a bit more life into proceedings, but sadly, it hasn't been implemented. *Rainbow Six 3* does not feature LAN support, but let's face it, that's not really a major flaw to most people.

Firing up the online component, you have three game modes to choose from. Team Survival Mode is the pick of the bunch and it pits two heavily armed teams against each other in a battle of force and wits. With careful co-ordination through the voice comms, you can engineer a wide variety of offensive and defensive tactics. Once you are eliminated, you have to sit out and watch over your team's efforts in spectator mode until the round concludes.

The free-for-all Survival Mode gives you similar 'last man standing' style gameplay, only without teams. This generally degrades into the 'battle of the campers', and makes for a slow and generally boring game.

The other game mode is dubbed Sharpshooter, which is essentially Survival Mode, but with respawning allowed. At the end of a preset time limit, the winner is the player that has caused the highest body count.

However, *Rainbow Six 3*'s online play suffers from one major downfall – only six-player support. When other games are boasting a whole 16 players, it's not a very impressive effort. Another of the gripes is the somewhat

POLITICAL CRISIS

After giving each game a some serious playtime, *Rainbow Six 3* does one-up *SOCOM II* in one area. For gamers who aren't yet set up for online gaming, the single player game is about even with *SOCOM II* and the two-player co-op modes give it an edge. We've been impressed with both of the titles and they've now raised the stakes for any newcomer vying for the throne. If it weren't for *SOCOM II* just arriving on the scene, *OPS2* would back *R6 3* every step of the way!



modest assortment of weapons you have to choose from when you play over the 'net. It almost feels like Heckler and Koch have put together a sampler showbag for an anti-terrorist exhibition. There are just a couple of representatives from each firearms category, including sidearms, submachine guns, shotguns, assault rifles and sniper rifles, with a similarly restrictive array of tertiary ordnance to choose from. Maybe this was done for networking reasons, but it really detracts from the feel of the game. For the love of God, no incendiary grenades? What's that all about?!

Rainbow Six 3 is decent but the numerous shortfalls leave you feeling like you've been lumped with a substandard port. While the online part of the game falls pretty flat, and there are no real unlockables to speak of, for the patient, the single player and co-op modes will equate to quite a few lazy weekends worth of fun.

You can happily open up your wallet knowing that you'll be purchasing a good game, just don't expect a spectacular one. All up though, *Rainbow Six 3* is a solidly entertaining tactical shooter. **Nick O'Shea**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Technically impressive, but not incredible
Sound	08	Excellent positional effects and music
Gameplay	07	Solid single player and co-op
Life span	06	Not much to do after completing the campaign

Rainbow Six 3 falls short of being brilliant had it just gone that extra mile. Fingers crossed for next time.

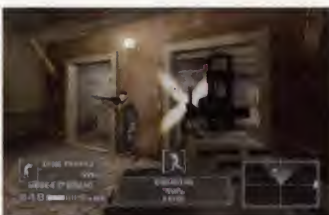
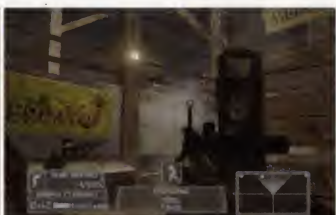
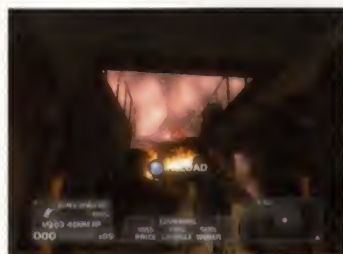
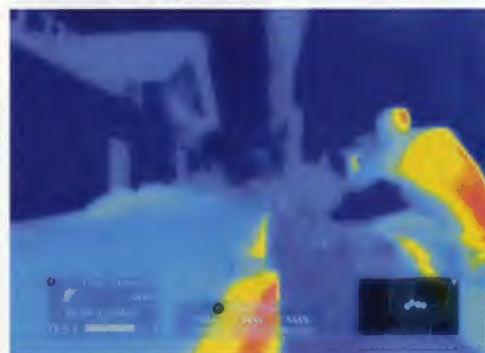
07



Level detail is great, but not quite the best we've seen



Nope, this is NOT a night club level!



The set of *Teletubbies* has undergone a major overhaul for next season



You will find some outdoor areas to explore



"So my fruitcake isn't
moist enough,
eh, Vera?"



Pick a grudge. Any grudge. Destruction Derby Arenas.

Want to settle old scores? Then cut mates down to size playing split-screen. Play online with the network adaptor or simply battle it out offline. With 20 muscle cars and 18 tracks to choose from, just be careful who you cross.



www.ddarenas.com



fun,
anyone?
PlayStation 2



Feather on his noggin – does that mean he's 'light-headed'?



"Ahh! Rope burn!"



PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: MARCH
WEBSITE:
WWW.TAK.GAME.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

■ BACK STORY

Nickelodeon is one of the biggest cartoon networks western-worldwide, and THQ one of the biggest developers of kids' games. Having collaborated on creating games for established Nick-toons such as *SpongeBob Squarepants* and *Rugrats*, Tak is the first game that the two industry giants have co-created. It will be interesting to see where it ends up.

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

That's some really baaaad mojo

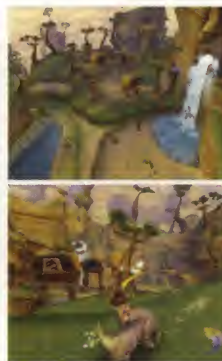


Created under the instigation of cartoon bigshot Nickelodeon, *Tak and the Power of Juju* is that rarity in western-developed games – a springboard for a cartoon series (rather than the other way around). It's just a little unfortunate that this happens to be the most noteworthy aspect of the game. Or maybe there's just a little too much competition around.

It starts like this: all the inhabitants of the Pupanunu village have been turned into sheep by a jealous, grasping sorcerer who wants all the power for himself. All, that is, except for the village shaman and a big-nosed, pot-bellied boy named Tak. Furthermore, this evil sorcerer has stolen the power of the moon juju – the lovely patron of the Pupanunu people. And so, of course, it falls to Tak to restore the power of the juju and save the people of his tribe.

YOUNG AT HEART

From the outset, it is established with startling clarity that this is most assuredly a game for the younger demographic – with precious little to interest the older gamer, except for maybe the humour. When you load up the game for the first time, the village shaman comes to the screen and addresses the viewer in what is supposed to be a funny introduction. It works with style – but sadly such moments are few and far between.



⬆	BETTER THAN:
	JIMMY NEUTRON
⬇	WORSE THAN:
	KYA: DARK LINEAGE

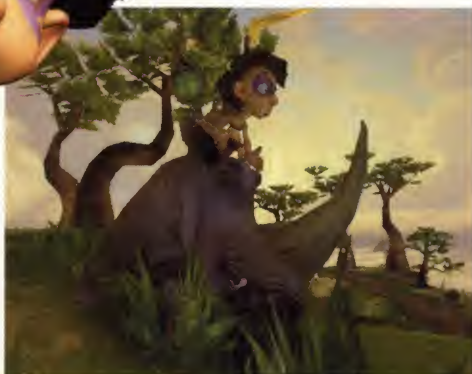
🎯	LAB TEST
✓	What they nailed this time:
	The characters really are quite unique, and could have made this game truly great
✗	What they need to fix:
	This is a game that could really have benefited by having a map

After you take control of Tak, you'll meet Flora – daughter of the moon juju, and official guide. She'll explain how to whack monsters with your stick – but then neglect to mention how to put the stick away. She's also mighty fond of herself, and her little encouraging comments will make you grit your teeth with annoyance. Seriously – who wants to be patronised by a ball of green light?

The gameplay is pretty stock-standard for the platformer genre. This means leaping around like a monkey, shimmying across ledges, riding strange animals, whacking things with a stick, magic spells, the inevitable item collection, and a little bit of sand/snow boarding to relieve the monotony (it doesn't work too well). Normally you'd find that there's enough action there to sustain at least a median level of interest, but *Tak* presents absolutely no challenge. And I mean none.

If your character dies, apart from the yellow feather in your hair turning purple, the only thing that happens is that you get deposited somewhere close to where you were, and you pick up where you left off. Exactly where you left off. If you're in the middle of a boss fight, the monster will still sustain all the damage you'd given it previously. You can fall off ledges indefinitely and still be in exactly the same spot. If you were collecting anything, you will still have all the items you'd already collected (this may not necessarily be a problem).

Counteracting this, though, is the amount of health Tak has. Very little. So, he dies a lot. Perhaps it's not such



Weird animal fact #24: Orang-utans like using sheep for basketballs



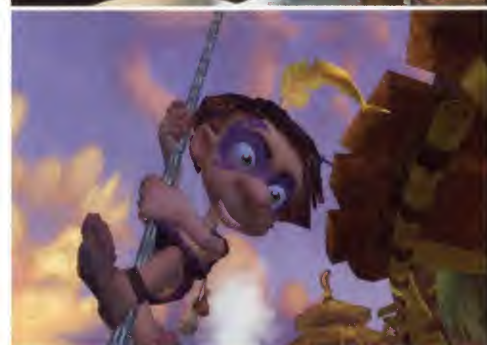
TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU



Riding without a saddle – yeeowch!



"Hey baby, ever been rammed from behind?"



"No, I will not 'peel your banana' for you!"



a bad thing that you won't have to do everything over ... and over ... and over.

All of this takes place in sprawling, hard-to-navigate levels, made all the more fun due to the absence of any kind of map. These are consistently laid out in such a way as to make it agonisingly unclear where your next objective lies, and if you stray from the narrow paths, it is all too easy to become lost and confused.

HERE'S LOOKING AT JU

Cosmetically, *Tak and the Power of Juju* is a highly polished piece of work. The character models are quite nicely done, either in spite of or because of the unusual, exaggerated shapes of the characters, and the incidental animals are highly detailed. The environments have been lovingly constructed – a fact that is slightly concealed by the brightness of the colours, but true nevertheless. While there may be prettier games on the market, and the frame rate and camera are problematic, *Tak* is nevertheless a visual treat.

Likewise, the sounds put into the game are done with style. The voice acting in the cut-scenes is believable (even if Tak's in-game sounds can get a little irritating – the first time he shouts "Boomshakalaka" or "Owned" is harrowing, and it only gets worse from there), and the music, while definitely not masterpiece material and slightly on the generic side, meshes in quite nicely with the environments, and doesn't overpower the game.

Given the competence demonstrated in these two areas, the jump to a cartoon seems a logical step. In fact, it's not often that you can forget that this is little more

FEELING A LITTLE ... CHICKEN?

One of the better things about this game is watching your character bounce around the screen dressed as a chicken or a sheep. Or it could be one of the bad things ... It depends on Tak's REAL motives for dressing as barnyard animals ...



than a jumped-up marketing strategy to promote a cartoon. Flora seems a little too prominent, offering advice and tutorials that, really, are completely redundant, and her cutesy schtick, a result of unnecessary over-characterisation, will make you want to take your stick and whack the little dear upside the head.

There are a few unique bits and pieces that are neatly incorporated into the game. The inclusion of animals to help with some of the puzzles is a great idea – you can be flung around by orang-utans to help reach otherwise inaccessible areas, or disguise yourself as a sheep or a chicken, or ride emus for a little extra speed – but, because the rest of the gameplay is so constantly mediocre, this seems little more than a cheap gimmick in order to keep the little ones interested for more than, say, 15 minutes.

Tak and the Power of Juju could have been a great game. Hell, five years ago, it might have been. It's a damned shame that there are so many better platformers currently on the market. **Michelle Starr**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Not too fowl. Get it? Bah ...
Sound	07	Great voice acting, music leaves you feeling flat
Gameplay	04	Do the words "boring" and "Irritating" ring a bell?
Life span	03	Ermm ...

Worth playing, if only to chuckle at a little guy in a chicken suit. You might get over that pretty quickly, though.

06



Could Spawn be looking to get into home movies?



Don't expect an epic, thought-provoking journey!

SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON

Prepare to unleash the most bizarre weapons on PS2

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
PRICE: \$99.99
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: MARCH
WEBSITE: WWW.SPAWNARMAGEDDON.COM/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: YES

BACK STORY

Yet another in the long list of super heroes to make the leap from two-dimensional comic book pages to the three dimensional videogame world. This is Spawn's first outing on PS2.



Spawn started out life as Al Simmons, an elite CIA agent who suddenly realised that his frequent assassination missions might not be serving his country in the way he had hoped.

Having questioned his boss about this he quickly found himself sent to the grave by his fellow agents. But hell wasn't ready to let Simmons' talents go to waste. They offered him a deal and Simmons jumped at it in the hope that he might once again be reunited with his beloved wife. However, when he returned things had changed. It was five years later, life had moved on and Simmons was now Spawn, tasked with recruiting soldiers for the final great battle between good and evil.

Spawn just couldn't bring himself to work for evil so he betrayed hell and this is where he now finds himself. All he has in life is protecting the good, living in shadows and alleyways – all the while trying to defend himself from the assassins that hell still sends to punish him for his disobedience.

THE SPERMINATOR?

How will PS2 owners remember *Spawn* in the years to come? When the dust settles on the final epic battle with hell's minions will we reminisce over the death defying leaps from towering rooftops and plunges into darkened caverns? Will the gallons of spilled claret prey on our minds? Or will we eulogise about the meaty weaponry used to rip chunks out of the hordes of ghoulishly large aggressors that stood in our way? Actually, it's

none of the above. In spite of all this violent goodness, Spawn's penchant for unintentional bondage implements tends to steal the limelight.

You see Spawn's default means of dishing out pain is supposed to be a couple of chains that are propelled from his hip area. Unfortunately for Mr Spawn our view of him is predominantly from behind in typical 3rd-person action adventure fashion. This leads to the rather amusing circumstance where your lead character does a pelvic thrust every time you encounter a vicious nasty and proceeds to wallop them with a rather long, bendy thing that seems to emanate from "that" area. Not so much shooting from the hip as shooting something else entirely. Maybe our hero has missed his vocation and should ditch the "S" from his name and move into the low budget, home movie business instead!

I'VE GOT A SHOTGUN

As for his other means of disposing of ghouls from hell they're thankfully all strictly of the solid, gun-powered variety. Sawn-off shotguns, twin pistols, miniguns and the obligatory missile launchers are just some of the tasty weapons you get to play with. You also get to power up your arsenal after every level. However, this presents you with the unenviable choice of spending your hard-earned credits on your tools of death or on boosting your health status. It's a delicate balancing act that offers some pleasant, thought-provoking respite from all the carnage. But

SHOTGUNS, TWIN PISTOLS, MINIGUNS – JUST SOME OF THE TASTY WEAPONS

BETTER THAN:
BLADE 2
WORSE THAN:
DEVIL MAY CRY

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
The atmosphere and look of the comics
What they need to fix:
Ditch the button-bashing mindlessness of the battles





All of the action takes place in the third-person view



The new series of Chains of Love takes an unexpected twist



Almost as scary as running into Nan in the middle of the night



There's a good variety of enemies, though all are easily dispatched

WHERE'S THE STORY?

Spawn: Armageddon is the Texas Chainsaw Massacre of videogames. Wholesale slaughter with minimal attempt at some sort of justifying storyline. The lack of involving narrative never hurt *Devil May Cry* and it's a similar situation here. Everything is geared towards getting stuck into the worst that hell has to offer and building up your arsenal of weaponry to take on even larger foes without any superfluous distractions. To aid your progress you also have the ability to unleash hell powers as long as your supply of necroplasm doesn't run dry ...

that's about as far as the mental stressing goes.

The intention is to force you to select the appropriate weaponry to take out different assailants. Well, that was probably the idea back when *Spawn: Armageddon* was a twinkle in the developer's eye. Unfortunately, in practice we found it possible to plough our way through most of the game using his basic attacks and simply repeatedly hammering the attack buttons. Considering that your choice of killing tool and desire to upgrade them is one of the game's major hooks intended to keep you soldiering on, it's a pretty major flaw. In effect *Spawn's* mindless, repetitive nature pretty much negates any strategic thought or weapon selection dilemmas.

I'MAGEDDON SICK OF SHOOTING

The only relief from all of that button-bashing hecticness comes in the form of platformer-style leaping around. It's pretty simple stuff but works well in giving your burning fingers some time to cool and let feeling return to those overused digits. The actual cerebral challenge is pretty much redundant with the feeling that you're being led by the hand through much of the game's restrictively linear levels. Door-opening levers are always right under your nose and giving them a hefty whack with your axe is about as elaborate as the puzzles get. And that pretty much sums up what this game has to offer.

Spawn: Armageddon has no pretensions of being

anything other than a traditional action-heavy videogame, pure and simple. Realism has been totally overlooked in favour of solid gaming staples such as power-ups, token collecting and blocked off areas that become accessible once so many demons have been slain. Deformable scenery and objects add nicely to the game's destructive, explosive soul but it's all window dressing for a relatively simple exercise in blasting, slicing and flaying anything that moves. And if that's your bag it does a very respectable job.

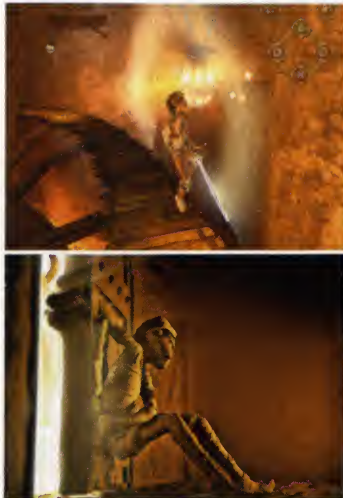
Devil May Cry did it with more finesse and style, which helped to drag you further into its world, but that was over two years ago. If you fancy something distractingly loud and messy that won't tax the brain, *Spawn: Armageddon* is your gaming alternative to the latest all-action movie. **— Mikey Foley**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Impressively captures the feel of the comics
Sound	07	Nice battle accompanying rock music
Gameplay	06	Unoriginal and lacking in depth
Life span	05	Shorter than a headless dwarf

A slice of relentless action that offers no originality, never taxes your brain but still manages to entertain.

08



SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

Finally we get to walk like an Egyptian

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: EUROCOM
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: MARCH
WEBSITE:
WWW.THQ.COM/SPHINX/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES

BACK STORY

Eurocom have plenty of experience on the black box. They've been behind some best sellers like James Bond: Nightfire and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.



	BETTER THAN:
	WORSE THAN:

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	What they need to fix:



Sphinx is quite different to many other action-adventure titles out in stores at the moment. It focuses more on overcoming puzzling obstacles than hacking and slashing into armies of bad guys. The main character begins with no weapons or magical abilities. But the most noticeable difference is that besides the score and sound effects, there is no sound present in the game at all.

The game isn't in black and white, the sound is turned up as high as it can go, and we couldn't find Charlie Chaplin anywhere – so why is there no noise coming out of the character's mouth? Having to constantly read subtitles takes away from the primary enjoyment of most games. How are we supposed to know what type of character Sphinx is by a bunch of words on the bottom of the screen?

We know Solid Snake is cool because of the sound of his voice, we know Max Payne has been to hell and back by the way he speaks, and we know Dexter is an annoying rodent because of the screech in his voice. You're not able to connect with any of these feelings in Sphinx and it's a shame because it's the game's only flaw.

You begin the game as Sphinx, a half-lion-half-human demigod who has been summoned alongside his buddy Horus (who looks a lot like the bald eagle character from *The Muppets*) to find out what activities are taking place in the Castle of Uruk. During your journey you'll confront many obstacles and while you'll cruise through most of them quicker than a shot of



WHILE THE CHALLENGES DON'T MATCH UP TO MGS2, THERE IS STILL FUN TO BE HAD

Baileys, some will leave your head hurting worse than an ice cream headache.

During the course of the game you'll also take control of the other title character, the cursed mummy, or Tutankahamen as he's also known. Toot, as he's known around *OPS2 Towers*, has his own share of challenges that revolve around stealth. While the challenges don't match up to *MGS2*, there is still fun to be had. One challenge in particular had Toot sliced up into three pieces and it was up to us to steer all three pieces to safety while not getting busted by any guards. Toot's story runs parallel to Sphinx's and while some of it may seem pointless, it all comes together in the end.

As we mentioned before, Sphinx begins with nothing but the clothes on his back and it's through these challenges and obstacles that he's able to learn new abilities and gain weapons. These aren't just in the game for show either. Most of the time you'll come across an obstacle that's impossible to pass with what you already know and have. But once you've learned the new ability



SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY



There's only one floor, I mean flaw, in this new game



Special attacks can see off gangs of enemies at once



The challenges are very satisfying after completion

MONSTER MASH

Ever wondered how much a Featherless Turkey is worth on the street? Here is the price list for some of the monsters in Sphinx.

ALMOST-A-BULL: Not quite a bull, but almost. 15 Scarabs.

ELECTRIC ARMADILLO: Running in to this creature will give you quite a shock. 10 Scarabs.

FEATHERLESS TURKEY: Don't try serving this up for Christmas. 120 Scarabs.

SHUTTLECOCK BIRD: This is what the Egyptians used to play Badminton. 200 Scarabs.

NOSE NEEDLER: You'll be pierced off if you come close to this one. 15 Scarabs.

TORTOISEMAN: The predecessors to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Priceless.



Nope, we couldn't get a peep out of the turtle either!



The controls are accurate - one of the game's strengths



Like most platformers these days, you'll find yourself underwater sooner or later

or gained the new weapon, a light bulb will switch on above your head and the solution to the obstacle becomes clear.

To break up the action, *Sphinx* also has some side quests. While they're not as fun as the mini-games in *Ratchet and Clank 2*, they are just as unique. One standout was the monster quest where Sphinx has to use a special beetle to capture monsters. Players simply beat down the monster like a dirty rug and then once they're flashing yellow, whip out the capture beetle and send it to its new home. Capturing enough monsters will give Sphinx a special reward but as we mentioned, it's not necessary in completing the game.

There is plenty to like about *Sphinx*. The level design is some of the best we've seen and makes exploring enjoyable, the visuals are clean and crisp and the majority of the obstacles are challenging. The only thing dampening the experience is the missing dialogue. It's as noticeable as an episode of *The Simpsons* without Homer and it's the only thing that fails to truly bring this game to life. **A** Anthony O'Connor

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	09	Crisp clean visuals that are amazing to look at
Sound	05	Great score and effects, but Sphinx needs to speak
Gameplay	08	Tight controls and excellent level design
Life span	07	No difficulty levels and nothing after completion

If you hate characters crapping on and on in cutscenes then Sphinx will be right up your alley.

07



The "drops" are even more spectacular than Ben and Jen's



No hands, no feet and soon ... no teeth!



The Bandidos decided to open up a health retreat

DOWNHILL DOMINATION

Conquer vast mountains without losing several layers of skin!

PUBLISHER: ATARI
DEVELOPER: INCOG INC.
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: MARCH
WEBSITE: WWW.CODEMASTERS.COM/DOWNHILL/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

Incog's main claims to fame are the Twisted Metal games and the big beast battler War of the Monsters. It may seem strange then that such a developer would stray into the somewhat more realistic world of extreme sports but then Incog has never just been a one-trick pony ...

	BETTER THAN:
	MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2
	WORSE THAN:
	SSX3

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	The thrilling sensation of really speeding down the mountain
	What they need to fix:
	More game modes, more things to unlock and maybe a bit of a story



Let's face it, there's very little in this world that's as stupid as hooning down a steep mountain on a push bike. Cool to watch? Sure. Impressive in a daredevil kind of way? Indeed. But not the brightest pastime when all is said and done. The chances of flayed skin, split scalps and even death are high and frankly, we here at OPS2 Towers cannot, with good conscience, recommend the activity.

It's fortunate then that the good people at Incog Inc. have taken the deadly concept and ported it rather tastily to the PS2 where the only potential injury is wrist cramp or "gamer's elbow".

Downhill Domination is the latest in a series of extreme sports games, following on from the excellent SSX3 and sublime THUG. Now understand that Downhill isn't quite of the calibre of the previously mentioned titles but it is a fun little game in its own right. Like SSX3 the game is a pretty simple deal. Don't expect plot or character development here. Basically you start the game, choose a character from of the typical cadre of generic "Brit Guy", "Cute Japanese Girl" and "Sassy alternative type", then hop on a bike and choose a mountain to zip down like a greased piggie.

Conceptually, the whole thing sounds a bit been there/done that/got over it but happily what Downhill lacks in originality it makes up for in sheer excitement. Very few games of this type have ever managed to give the player a real sense of speed and that's something we've got here in spades. You'll literally feel your stomach drop away as you fly off the edge of some ludicrously

high cliff, only to bust out some funky-looking move then land with the grace of a particularly fancy gazelle.

Helping this sense of colon-relocating swiftness in a major way is the excellent level design. Whether you are jumping from cliff to cliff amidst snowy mountain peaks (replete with avalanches and lightning strikes) or busting a gut through the winding city streets, Downhill Domination never fails to excite. The multiplayer mode is similarly impressive with split-screens doing very little to stagger the breakneck pace.

Unfortunately, once the adrenalin wears off it becomes apparent that there isn't much more in the game than what you see upon first glance. It doesn't have THUG's sprawling storyline or SSX3's sack of unlockable goodies, so once you complete the career modes that's pretty much all she wrote. Certainly replay value is added by the multiplayer element but essentially Downhill Domination is a slick, dependable little sports game that has some stiff competition. **— Mikey Foley**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Solid models, big courses and silky smooth
Sound	07	Effective sound effects with some pretty dire music
Gameplay	08	Loads of fast fun, especially with a group of mates
Life span	07	Enjoyable but probably not a long-term prospect

Downhill Domination is a fine extreme racer that should appeal to all daredevil speed freaks.

07



FORCES OF NATURE!

One of the cool aspects of Downhill Domination is that the environments aren't just pretty; they actually interact with the racers. Beware of bolts of lightning, rock slides and even unfriendly animals trying to use their horns to turn you into a giant kebab.



You'll find everything, bar the kitchen sink



Yup, just another day at the office!





BETTER THAN:
GHOST RECON
WORSE THAN:
SOCOM II

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
Voice commands and the online modes
What they need to fix:
Improve the visuals – the Ghost Recon engine is looking pretty dated

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

By the time Snake gets there, the jungle will be so passé...

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
PRICE: \$49.95 (OR \$79.95 WITH USB HEADSET)
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-16 ONLINE)
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.GHOSTRECON.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
PERIPHERALS: NETWORK ADAPTER, USB HEADSET

BACK STORY

The Ghost Recon series debuted on the PC in 2001 and was a big hit with fans of tactical shooters. The translation to the PS2 at the end of 2002 was slightly watered down and lacked the online play that enhanced the PC experience. Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm is more of an expansion than a full sequel.

Their new cubbyhouse was definitely worth defending



Twelve months ago we would have deemed squad-based tactical shooters to be about as mainstream as Peruvian cinema. That was of course before *SOCOM: US Navy Seals* was released and sold by the khaki-coloured bucketload. Thus, commanding your troops around the place and patiently hiding in bushes became a hugely popular experience with the bulk of PS2 owners.

But before *SOCOM*, there was the original *Ghost Recon*, which lacked the online play and voice recognition features that made its squad-based successor such a massive hit. Fortunately Ubisoft has added both the aforementioned features into its new standalone expansion, *Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm*. And it's budget priced to boot.

In *Jungle Storm* you once again take command of two teams of three soldiers, kit them up with various types of guns, gadgets and explosives and send them into a series of sticky situations. It's set in Bogota in 2009, where a drug-funded warlord is plotting an attack on the poor ol' Americans. It's up to the Ghosts, an elite team of US Army Green Berets to take matters into their own hands and eradicate the Columbian drug cartel.

You certainly won't be finishing *Jungle Storm* in a hurry – there's a massive 16 single player campaign missions to complete, along with a whopping 31 multiplayer maps to be played via split-screen or online. The single player campaign mode in *Jungle Storm* has been tweaked since the previous game; the controls have been streamlined and the interface has been improved.

Any fans who complained about the target reticle turning red when it hovered over an enemy in the previous game will be happy to know that while the feature is still there it can now be turned off.

Besides the online component, the other big addition to the game is the voice recognition in the single player mode. If anything, the voice commands are even better than those in *SOCOM* in terms of the responsiveness from your team, and you'll rarely have to repeat yourself at all provided you speak fairly clearly. Though there's a lengthy list of commands you can issue, they are structured intuitively so you won't have to refer to the manual for too long.

With *Jungle Storm*, Ubisoft has provided gamers with an inexpensive alternative to *SOCOM II*. Both use voice and have great online features, and realistically the only decision you need to make is whether you prefer the run-and-gun action of *SOCOM* or the patient, calculated killing of *Jungle Storm*. **Anthony O'Connor**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Blockier but more colourful than its predecessor
Sound	09	Excellent explosions and machine gun fire
Gameplay	08	Rewarding, as long as you have the patience
Life span	08	Plenty of campaigns, online mode is excellent

As a budget-priced tactical shooter, *Jungle Storm* is an absolute bargain. Spend the savings on face paint ...



IT TAKES TWO TO SIXTEEN TO TANGO

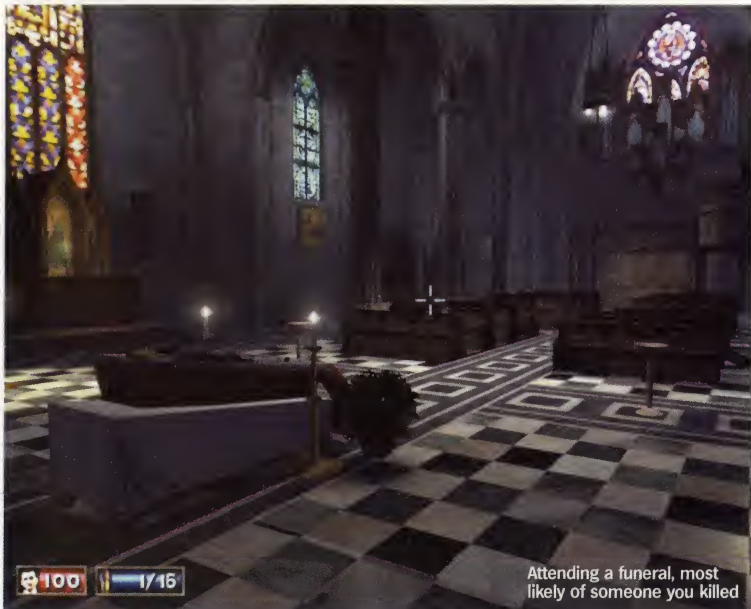
Jungle Storm really shines when you and 15 other players go head-to-head online. Voice chat is supported so you can co-ordinate your team with ease and there are numerous modes from Deathmatch to six-on-six battles where one team has to defend a base and the other has to attack. Of course, it doesn't take too many hits to kill you so the whole online experience becomes quite an intense affair. You can't just run into gunfights like Rambo would



MAFIA



There are plenty of impressive visuals on offer. In particular, the indoor areas are bloody tasty!



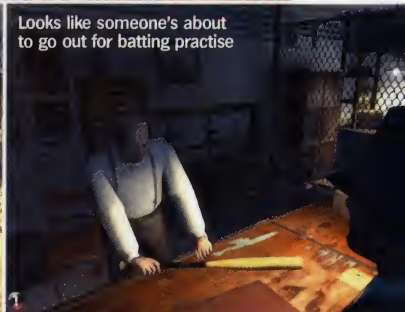
Attending a funeral, most likely of someone you killed



Ice T isn't the Original Gangster. Nope, it's our man Tommy!



"Put your hands on your hips and shake it all around ..."



Looks like someone's about to go out for batting practise



MAFIA

Take a trip back in time and become the Original Gangster!



"I told you I wanted to wear the black coat this morning"



The crimes in *Mafia* get surprisingly violent at times



"I'll take three of each. And make it snappy"



PUBLISHER: GATHERING
DEVELOPER: ILLUSION
SOFTWARES
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: FEBRUARY
WEBSITE: WWW.MAFIA-
GAME.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES

BACK STORY

Crime games are nothing new on the PS2 but it's refreshing to see the "OG" gangsters get their props in this new effort from Illusion Softworks. Will modern players respond to the old time setting? That remains to be seen ...

	BETTER THAN:
	THE GETAWAY
	WORSE THAN:
	GTAIII & GTA: VICE CITY

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	The authentic look and feel of the 1930s
	What they need to fix:
	The driving sections. Seriously, shouldn't these be fun?



America in the 1930s was a volatile place to live. Prohibition, the banning of all alcohol (we'd love to see them try that in Australia!) was giving rise to a new type of criminal: The Mobster. Based around the "family" concept which involved loyalty, a strict hierarchy and lots of killing, crime was for the first time truly organised. It's these heady days that provide the backdrop for *Mafia*; an atmospheric new crime caper from Illusion Softworks.

After a very cinematic opening, one that would not look out of place in a Francis Ford Coppola *Godfather* sequel, the player is thrust into the scuffed shoes of Tommy, a humble cabbie. Tommy's smoking a cigarette on his break when two mobsters leap into his car and order him at gunpoint to get them out of there, pronto. That's when you take over the action as you try to drive your rather unwieldy vehicle away from the gangsters that are chasing you.

From there on the game plays a bit like a 1930s version of *GTA* mixed with a healthy dose of *The Getaway*. Tommy moves up the ranks of the mob by passing missions. The game's structure is: largely lengthy, well animated exposition scenes followed by a driving section, then followed up with a crime (often violent ones). This is, these days, a tried and true formula for games but it does work quite well. Those of you feeling a bit cynical about this overused game engine should remember that *Mafia* has been out on the PC for quite a while.

There, in fact, lies the rub. *Mafia* may have worked a treat on the PC, a system that is used to slower, more ponderous games but here it feels, well, a little dated and stodgy. For a start the vehicle sections are just plain boring. The vehicle physics may be accurate for '30s-style cars but they're certainly not fun in any way. Your motor is slow, can barely turn corners and can rarely build up a decent amount of speed. This wouldn't be so bad if every mission didn't feature lots of driving around but it does. Sure, once you get to a combat section things improve mightily but the driving parts seem to last so much longer and there are just so many more of them.

Most players will find that *Mafia* does in fact have a lot of treats to offer, it's just that you'll have to wade through a lot of sluggish boredom to get to them. *Mafia* is a good looking, engaging title but despite its generous offerings will probably fail to make you an offer you can't refuse. **Anthony O'Connor**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

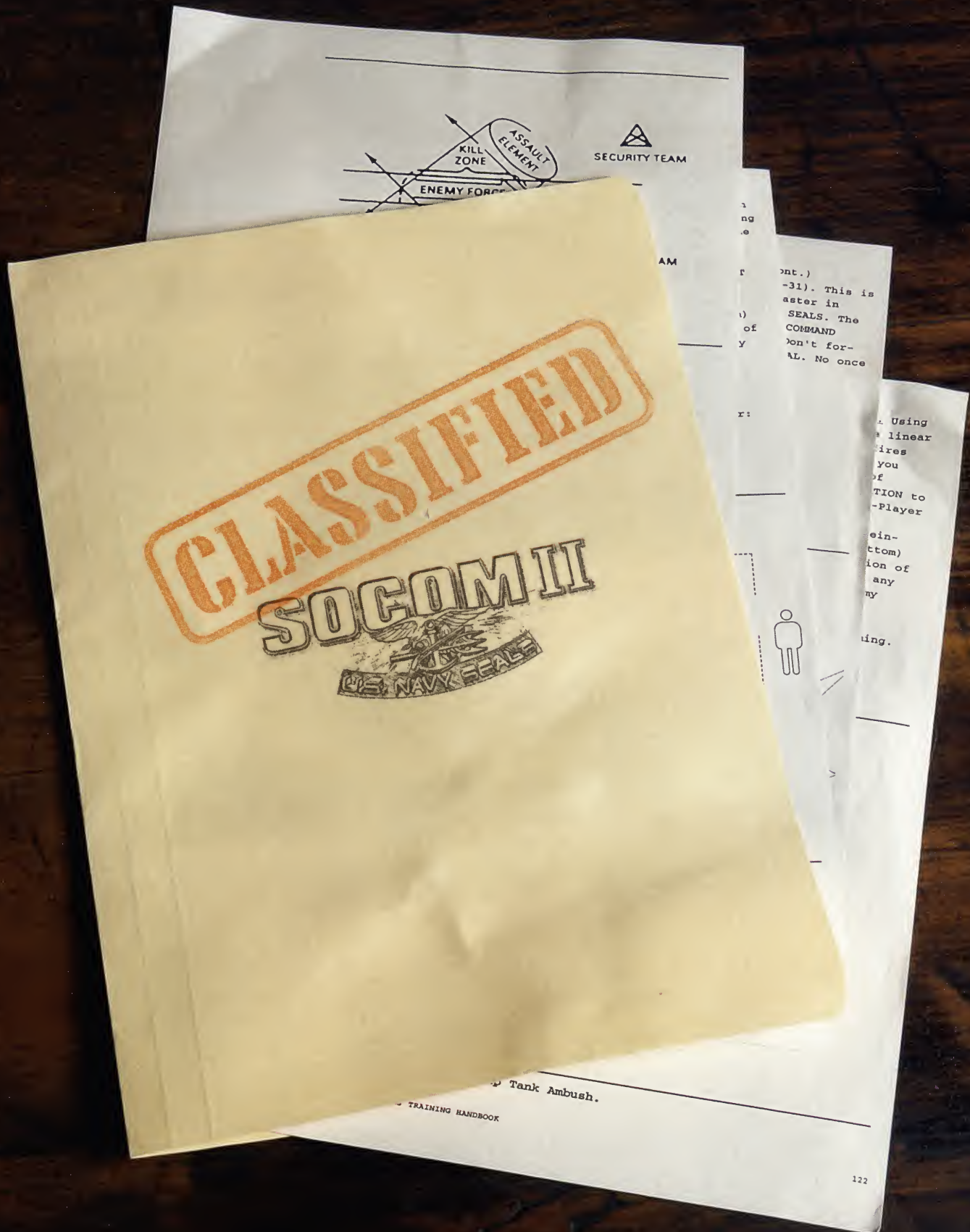
Graphics		Polished and slick, especially the indoor sections
Sound		Authentic sounding music and good voice acting
Gameplay		Good combat mixed with sluggish driving
Life span		Patient players will enjoy the lengthy adventure

Mafia is a slick title that could have been a classic if the driving sections weren't so dull! Close... but no cigar.



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COMING IN MARCH 2004.

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ROGUE OPS

Impossibly strong fingers – they're a must for the action heroine of today

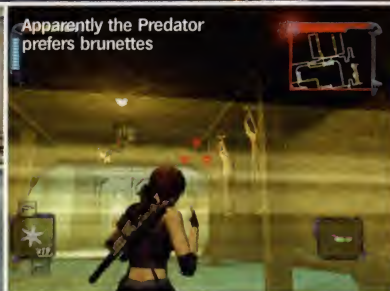


FEMME FATALE

Girls with guns – they bring out the inner-redneck in all of us. Nikki Connors is no exception ...



It's refreshing to see that equal opportunity stretches from the workplace to the world of terrorist ass-kicking. Up until now the stealth genre has been a testosterone fuelled affair with Sam Fisher and Solid Snake trying to get the edge on one another, but those two don't look too hot in a tight pair of pants. Enter Nikki Connors; attractive, efficient and deadly. Just don't take her home to meet your mother unless you want her whacked.



The chain gun – it's what you get shot with if you fail to forward on a chain letter

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: BITS STUDIOS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.BITSTUDIO.COM/ROGUEOPS/DEFAULT.ASP
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

Bits Studios is responsible for a horde of Game Boy titles but up until recently has not been seen on the PS2. Its previous PS2 appearance was Die Hard: Vendetta, a passable game outclassed by better competition.

ROGUE OPS

Can this sassy lass sneak past Sam and Snake?

⚠	BETTER THAN:
	NAVAL OPS
⚠	WORSE THAN:
	SPLINTER CELL
🎯	LAB TEST
✓	What they nailed this time:
	The stealth kill system makes for an entertaining mini-game
✗	What they need to fix:
	A lot of work is needed in order for Rogue Ops 2 to take on the big boys



So your family has just been blown up by terrorists. What do you do? Well, in true low budget, straight-to-video form you dive into the seedy underbelly of international terrorism and avenge them. Introducing Nikki Connors, a former Green Beret turned mother, who just lost her husband and daughter to the terrorist group Omega 19. While they sound more like a protein found in eggs and fish than a credible terrorist organisation, Nikki decides to join the covert ops group Phoenix to take them down. We haven't seen a plot this lame since *The Matrix Revolutions*.

Granted, it must be a little daunting for new entries into the stealth genre to constantly have to check over their shoulder for the eerie green goggles of Sam Fisher waiting to put one right between their eyes, but a story this generic borders on hilarious. Don't expect any MGS-style mind-bending plots here, this is strictly B-grade.

There's more to a game than just the story though, and it's apparent Bits Studios hasn't taken the competition lightly. Our heroine has obviously made more than a few trips to Retravisson and equipped herself with all manner of spy-em-up gadgets, from a device that tracks enemy heat signatures through walls and highlights hidden wires and traps, to an insect-sized controllable camera.

The most notable innovation is the stealth kill concept, which is less *Metal Gear Solid* and more *Manhunt*, just without the plastic bags and glass shards. Stealth kills can't be performed by a simple press of a button, rather you'll have to follow a series of prompts with the analogue stick to successfully eliminate the subject. Bungle the instructions and you'll bungle the kill, so tread carefully.

A single context-sensitive button is used to interact with most of the game's environments, which should make it fairly simple for stealth newbies to sneak through as it makes progressing through the game quite easy. That said, it can often be quite frustrating to have to spend an age twisting Nikki around to find the sweet spot that will make an icon turn green. Let's be honest; climbing up ledges should be much easier than this.

Coupled with that are the annoying controls that don't appear to allow Nikki to transfer smoothly from running to strafing, some sketchy enemy AI and a mixed bag of average graphics. The eight missions won't keep you occupied for that long, and there's no extra modes so you probably won't be going back. There might be a better than average game lurking somewhere under *Rogue Ops*' skin, but we couldn't find it.

It's not quite bad enough to be called *Rogue Flops*, but it's hard to stay too interested with both *MGS3* and *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* set to creep around the corner in the near future. **Luke Reilly**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Some nice effects but far from the best
Sound	05	Standard issue stealth sound, dodgy voice acting
Gameplay	06	Some innovative additions, but sloppy controls
Life span	05	Eight missions with little replay incentive

Rogue Ops only offers mildly interesting gameplay and is miles behind the current PS2 stealth kings.

06



"Just one more game of Root Beer Tapper ..."

START YOUR ENGINES!

F1
RACING

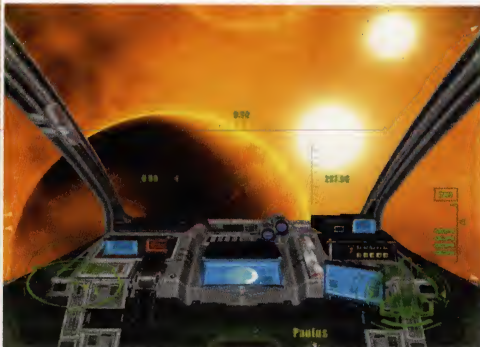


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Vipers are launched out of the Galactica via these tubes. Fast!



BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Engage yourself with this blast from the past



The all-important Galactica with its precious human cargo. Protect it at all costs!

PUBLISHER: VIVENDI
DEVELOPER: WARTHOG
PRICE: \$69.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.BATTLESTAR GALACTICAGAME.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

This isn't the first time developer Warthog has taken to the stars. Warthog was also behind the critically praised Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter, a top-notch FPS that most people ignored last year.

ⓐ	BETTER THAN:
	IRON ACES 2
ⓧ	WORSE THAN:
	JEDI STARFIGHTER

🎯	LAB TEST
✓	What they nailed this time:
	Galactica fans will love the little details
✗	What they need to fix:
	The painful targeting system



The '70s was a strange decade. Sex was still safe, rock and roll had reached perfection and science fiction was rampant. *Battlestar Galactica* only lasted a mere 24 episodes, endured countless comparisons to *Star Wars* and got sued by George Lucas. But that's nothing to stop anyone making a game out of it 25 years later, is it?

Battlestar Galactica is a fairly standard space shooter in the style of *Colony Wars* or *Jedi Starfighter*. If you've played either of these, you won't be in for many surprises. The game is a prequel to the events of the original television series, with actors Richard Hatch and Dirk Benedict reprising their *Galactica* starring roles.

Mainly piloting your Colonial Viper you'll need to complete fairly generic objectives, which mainly boil down to destroying everything in the area except your wingmen. In some cases you'll take control of a Cylon Raider or even the gun turrets of the Galactica itself, but this doesn't mix up the gameplay that much.

The graphics are nothing to complain about, with nice textures and explosions, all handled with no frame rate issues. Sound is equally impressive – the voice talent provides a good deal of credibility.

However, there are a few problems with *Battlestar Galactica* that prevent it from turning LucasArts into flaming space junk. The controls are easy to pick up but the lack of tutorial missions means you'll have to consult the manual to get the most out of your vessel. Having to learn advanced moves on the fly is a little annoying, and you'll probably end up discovering some by accident.

The artificial intelligence is impressive, but sometimes enemies are a little too smart, especially for your wingmen. You comrades seem to be able to hold their own when on the offensive, but as soon as they need protection they turn into virtual cannon fodder. Performing well in the game earns you wingmen who respond to your commands, making things slightly more balanced, although they too tend to get shot regularly.

Lastly, the frustrating targeting system is programmed to find the closest bandit to your ship, not the most important in terms of your objectives. Needless to say, cycling through a dozen targets to find your desired one is time that you don't have when Cylon Raiders are bent on destroying you and the horse you rode in on.

In the end, *Battlestar Galactica* is better than your average licensed game and hardcore fans will probably love it. *Starfighter* and *Jedi Starfighter* have still got the edge, but that doesn't mean you won't get a good weekend's fun out of it. **— Luke Reilly**

OFFICIAL VERDICT		
Graphics	07	Nice effects but a little bland at times
Sound	08	The voice acting and atmosphere is great
Gameplay	06	Too many minor frustrations affect the pace
Life span	07	Heaps to unlock but can get repetitive
It's not the best in its field, but with such an ancient licence it could have been a lot worse.		

07

EEK! CYLONS!

Every piece of sci-fi worth its salt needs an instantly recognisable, scary-looking set of bad guys. *Star Trek* has the Borg, who turn you into one of them; *Alien* has the aliens, who'll tear your face off and lay eggs in your guts; and *Battlestar Galactica* has the Cylons, some sort of Stormtrooper/Tin Man hybrid who appear to try and make you laugh to death at their appalling costumes.





RULE NO: 88
NEVER SHOW
EMOTION



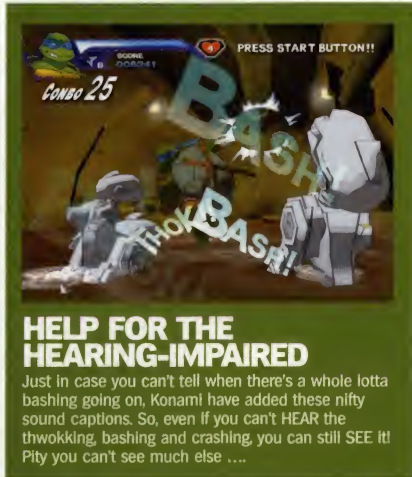
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fun,
anyone?
PlayStation 2



A-ha! Secret characters! Oops, not a secret anymore...



HELP FOR THE HEARING-IMPAIRED

Just in case you can't tell when there's a whole lotta bashing going on, Konami have added these nifty sound captions. So, even if you can't HEAR the thwokking, bashing and crashing, you can still SEE it! Pity you can't see much else



XIII sound captions = good, TMNT sound captions = bad



The gameplay puts a big fat 'cow' into 'cowabunga'!



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Lean, green ... brawling machines?

PUBLISHER: ATARI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: 30/03/2004
WEBSITE: WWW.KONAMI.COM/TMNT/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

■ BACK STORY

From 1984 through to 1996 – a 12-year period – the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* enjoyed success after success, from comic books to feature films. By 1997 – when the live-action TV series was launched – the Turtles had suffered that nasty over-saturation that killed even Pokémon, and they fell into semi-obscurity. It will be interesting to see if the pizza-scoffin' dudes can be revived ...



You may have noticed that the '80s has somehow become hip again. If you can stomach all the hot pink and high hair there's a lot of retro worth re-treading. You can go to the toy store and pick up Care Bears, Castle Greyskull and other, hideously coloured cutesy things. It also means – and this is where we rub our hands with glee – that Konami has rehashed and re-released our favourite chip-shop arcade game – *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Gnarly!

Well ... it could have been. Because apart from the game being cel-shaded and 3D, there's not really many differences. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* manages, even after all these years, to maintain its button-mashing origins. This may have been okay for an arcade game in the 1980s; it's not okay for a console game in 2004.

The game does offer some small solace – as well as the expected vs-mode, Konami has thrown in the under-utilised co-operative mode. It doesn't come without a few kinks of its own, though.

While the graphics are pretty, the number of sound-captions effectively obscures a great deal of the action on-screen, and the fixed camera angles get pretty frustrating. This is manageable, if mildly irritating, in single-player mode. If you have a mate tagging along, these pretty bubbles cover up the main thing that lets you tell the turtles apart – their heads. It's less fun when you think you're belting some dude, and in actuality you're wailing on a brick wall.

And when we say "tagging-along", we mean it. Player One must play second fiddle. While Player Two gets to tackle dojo levels, Player Two only watches on. Sigh.

The strangest thing is, there are four turtles, right? So, you'd expect there to be four-player mode, wouldn't you? Boy, would you be wrong! The maximum number of players is a disappointing two. So you won't be throwing any Turtles parties just yet; although, given the on-screen confusion with just two players, it's not such a huge loss.

There are challenging bosses to counteract the repetitive combat, and the nice graphics balance out most of the visual confusion. Each turtle has unlockable moves that can only be obtained by playing the game through with each character, and while the catchphrases shouted by triumphant turtles may grate jarringly on your eardrums, the background soundtrack lifted from the television series leaves you on familiar ground.

While this revival of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* lacks the complexity and finesse of its predecessors, it still has enough highlights to warrant a trip down memory lane for hardcore shell-heads. Just don't expect to be long before you're reaching for the next disc. ♪ Michelle Starr

Ⓐ	BETTER THAN:
	RADIATION EXPOSURE
Ⓢ	WORSE THAN:
	BUFFY: CHAOS BLENDS

🎯	LAB TEST
✓	What they nailed this time:
	The visuals and soundtrack recreate the Turtles at their slickest
✗	What they need to fix:
	Some combos and a blocking move would have been nice

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Pretty, but cel-shaded captions are painful
Sound	05	Boppy tunes and nerve-jangling catchphrases
Gameplay	04	Button-mashingly bland
Life span	06	Not really worth playing once for each turtle

The heroes in a half-shell are only half-baked this time. Might keep the kiddies amused for an hour or two.

06



THE 2004 ANNUAL

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Groove Armada

Ferry Corsten

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MIDWAY'S ARCADE TREASURES

It's like having a time machine and a big sack of coins

TREASURE CHEST

Here's the complete list of great, and not so great arcade games including on the disc:

Spy Hunter, Defender, Gauntlet, Joust, Joust 2, Paperboy, Rampage, Marble Madness, Robotron 2084, Smash TV, Bubbles, Roadblasters, Stargate, Moon Patrol, Blaster, Rampart, Sinistar, Super Sprint, 720, Toobin', KLAX, SPLAT!, Satan's Hollow, Vindicators and Root Beer Tapper.



Midway. It may not be a name that today's gamers know as well as Sony or EA, but back in the day Midway ruled the arcades with an iron fist. In those days arcade machines were big business – they were to home consoles what movie cinemas are to DVD players. Arcade games looked and played years ahead of the cruddy games we were stuck with on our tellyes, and seeing the tag 'Arcade Perfect' on a console game was the Holy Grail.

Midway's Arcade Treasures cobbles together more than 20 of its arcade highlights (see left for the full list). Probably the most famous game on the compilation is Gauntlet. Its brand of ghost-slaying, gold-collecting and potion-drinking multiplayer action went down a storm. With Spy Hunter 2 due next month it's worth checking out the original, but the vintage 'so hard it'll give you six aneurysms' instantly gameplay might turn some off.

By far the pick of the bunch is the almost unheard-of Root Beer Tapper. You play a bartender who has to pull

beers faster than Superman to get them to all the customers coming at you from four bars. Slide one too many beers or fail to catch one of the empties coming back and you lose a life. Fail to get a beer to the customers before they reach your end of the bar and they'll beat the snot out of you. Tapper is addictive fun that's a perfect warm-up game with friends – especially if there's any drinking going on. **Narayan Pattison**

Root Beer Tapper – the future of videogames!

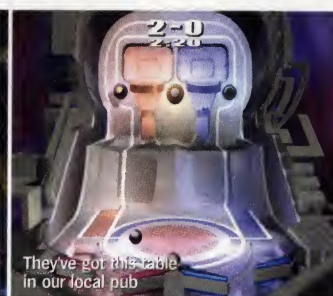
PUBLISHER: RED ANT
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY
PRICE: \$39.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.MIDWAY.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	04	Arcade perfect but painfully dated
Sound	05	Great if you love music that sounds like ringtones
Gameplay	08	Not as deep as the ocean but addictive as hell
Life span	07	Plenty of DVD extras to wade through

Beer Tapper alone is worth the 40 bucks. Trust us, when the Beer touches your lips it tastes so good!

08



It's like a space-age rollercoaster for balls

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: SONY
PRICE: \$49.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.UBISOFT.COM
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

FLIPNIC

Crazy Japanese at it again!



Entranced after years of observing steel balls banging into and around electric mushrooms, the lads at Sony have put on their programmers' caps and, whoop-di-do, whipped up the best pinball game on PlayStation 2.

In fact, woe betide the man, woman or child that comes to the Flipnic table expecting a normal game of pinball. On pumping your shiny sphere up the game's ramps it's taken to new, sometimes exotic, areas for the smacky-smack to continue. Each area usually hosts one objective to complete; like tagging all the bumpers or sending the ball up a ramp a set number of times. Accomplishing these tasks unlocks additional levels and features, and is necessary to progress through the game.

But, alas, despite wearing the pinball crown, all is not well in the land of hokey PS2 software. Even with all the bells, whistles, tassels and tinsel, Flipnic still feels like same-old pinball. After just 10 minutes of play, you'll

remember that pinball is all about "sticking it to the man", jiggling school, chewing gum and being hunched over the table with half your ass out of your jeans. For all its merits, the thrills of pinball just don't translate well onto the screen. You can't, for instance, perform a truly rebellious testosterone-fuelled tilt by tapping a shoulder button with your index finger. **James Ellis**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Buffed to a perfect sheen
Sound	05	Not its greatest asset
Gameplay	04	A little on the repetitive side
Life span	03	About half an hour

Top pinball action! Too bad it's about as niche as a midget fat-o-gram.

05



IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

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Don't believe in the afterlife? Neither did Officer Lazarus Jones, right up until it tapped him on the shoulder. This hard-headed Detroit cop has been drawn into the haunting horror grounds of the undead - and now, he's not just fighting disbelief, he's fighting monsters, mutants and ghouls. Prepare yourself and take a leap over to the other side.

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The teams are animated as a unit



NBA LIVE 2004

There's life, taxes and then there's EA's yearly updates ...



Even though this year's instalment of *NBA Live* is likely to generate as little interest as a student savings account, there's a very stylish game of hoops to be found.

NBA Live 2004 sees the return of Freestyle control, albeit toned down from last year's incarnation. With a heavy focus on team play and defensive strategy, the *Live* series is taking Shaq-sized steps toward becoming a serious simulation.

The first thing *Live* devotees will notice is the animation and sound quality improvements. 10-man motion capture has been used to simulate both teams working as units, not just of individuals running around in an enclosed space. CPU characters use evasive manoeuvres to stay open, defenders look for intercepts, duck and weave to stay with their mark, and players jostle for position. For such small improvements they add huge amounts of authenticity.

The sound quality is equally impressive; dynamic

crowds mean the stands will erupt after an uber-cool dunk, and they'll groan when their team falls behind.

The graphics have received an expected improvement, but they are a little behind Sega's *NBA* games. The Dynasty Mode is *Live's* trump card, where you have to handle signings, salaries and training. 2004 is quality and it's online. Of course, there'll be a better one next year. And the year after that. **Luke Reilly**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Plenty of polish – typically EA
Sound	09	Great commentary, dynamic crowds
Gameplay	08	More challenging but it's not perfect
Life span	08	Dynasty Mode and online should keep you busy

Noticeably better than 2003, but how much more can EA cram into their sports games?

08

PUBLISHER: EA SPORTS
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PRICE: \$89.95
PLAYERS: 1-8, ONLINE
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE:
WWW.EASPORTS.COM/
GAMES/NBALIVE2004/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: EA
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE:
WWW.NFLSTREET.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES



Time to have half-time "special" cuddles



NFL STREET

EA Big ditches Madden and heads out on the street.



Most Aussies would agree that the NFL could be cool if the players didn't wear all that padding or helmets and pulled off a sweet-looking move every now and again. Sure enough, *NFL Street* features players with no padding or helmets and the players pull off moves that would get any cheerleader's attention, let alone yours!

NFL Street shares most of its features with *NBA Street*. They both have a single player challenge mode, the "gamebreaker" and style points have been included, plus there are dozens of unlockables. However, it also brings something new to the field.

The gameplay is still more similar to the *Madden NFL* games than *NBA Street*. The menus on the other hand are easier to use and let you know which button corresponds with which player. If you can read a street directory you can play this game.

Bluff Mode is another key feature. Even after

selecting a play, you can still flick through the other plays. Once you've hit X, a second play will be selected – however, the first play you chose will be the one that will be performed. This stops opponents from planning defence based on your selections.

Featuring eight locations, four game modes and wild action, *NFL Street* is *Madden* on 'roids. **Paul Frew**

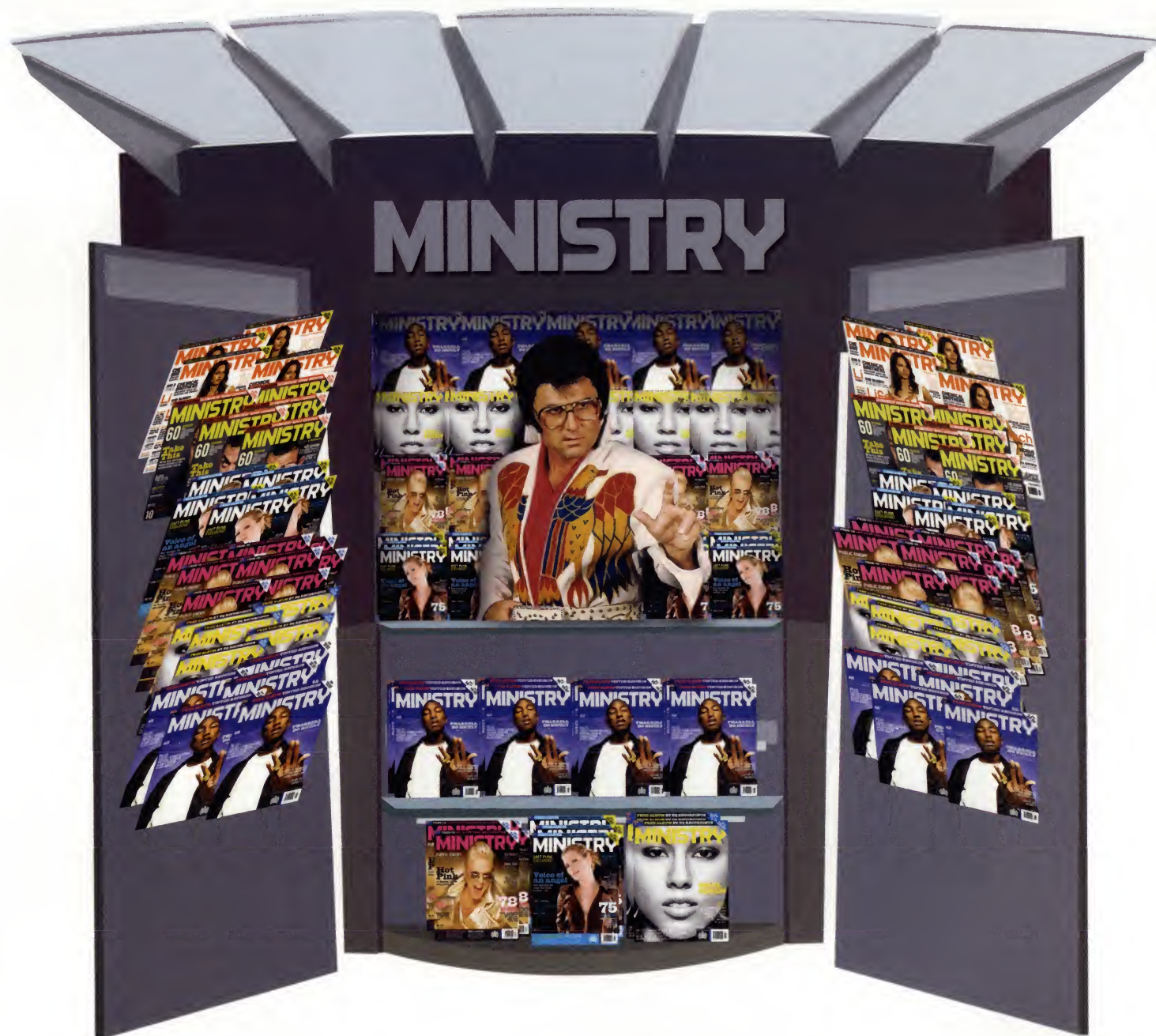
OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Not as clean as <i>Madden</i>
Sound	09	As usual, great thumping tunes
Gameplay	09	As easy as throwing a touchdown
Life span	09	Plenty of unlockables and extra features

Forget street cricket, *NFL Street* is so fun that it will have kids playing it on the street yelling "go long".

08





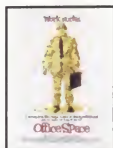
MINISTRY
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dvdreviews

Recommended viewing for your PlayStation 2 cinema system.

Office Space

Director: Mike Judge **Starring:** Ron Livingston, Jennifer Aniston, Ajay Naidu, David Herman, Gary Cole, Stephen Root, John C. McGinley, Richard Riehle **Distributor:** Fox **Out:** TBC **Price:** TBC



FILM: It's taken five years for Mike Judge's comic cry of rage against the nightmare of modern office life to see a DVD release

In Australia, and despite the disappointing lack of extras, we're very pleased to see it. Revolving around the main character Peter (Ron Livingston) and his two friends' plan to get revenge against the incompetent management that has continually mistreated them, the plot of *Office Space* is completely unoriginal (it rips off *Superman III* and even acknowledges the fact). However, the dialogue is smart, the supporting characters are excellent

and the themes presented in the film are universally identifiable. Who doesn't hate their boss? Who doesn't want to just take off work with no explanation to management? Who doesn't want to take that stubborn office fax machine out into the desert and smash it into pieces? **8/10**

EXTRAS: The *Milton* cartoon shorts that the film was based on, perhaps? Hilarious outtakes maybe? Nope, nothing but a plain old theatrical trailer. **Pity. 1/10**

VERDICT: The perfect comedy for anyone who has a job or a sense of humour. *Office Space* is a thoroughly identifiable and wholly enjoyable satire of the work place. **A- TO**

THE JUDGE PRESIDING

Background on the director, Mike Judge ... Before he lampooned the injustices of the work environment in *Office Space*, Mike Judge was responsible for creating the cartoon duo Beavis and Butt-head, which enjoyed success as a series on MTV and even spawned a feature film, *Beavis and Butt-head Do America*. Judge was also responsible for creating another successful cartoon series, *King of the Hill*.

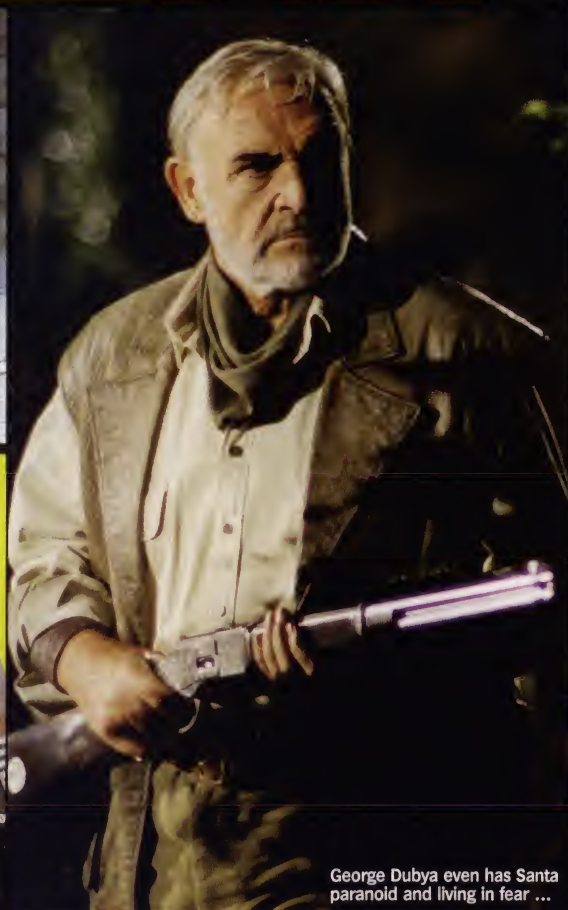


"Mmmkay?"



YOU WANT MORE?

For the inside scoop on all the latest DVD releases grab yourself a copy of What DVD.



George Dubya even has Santa paranoid and living in fear ...

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

Director: Stephen Norrington **Starring:** Sean Connery, Peta Wilson, Stuart Townsend, Shane West, Jason Flemyng **Distributor:** 20th Century Fox **Out:** Now **Price:** \$39.95



FILM: Feeling a lot like *X-Men* meets *Indiana Jones* – with a dash of *Wild, Wild West*'s knack for having 100 year old technology that's somehow more advanced than today's – *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* is a roller coaster of action and fantasy. Pitting a vampire, an immortal, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Invisible Man and world's greatest hunter against a shadowy villain was never likely to be dull. The plot may be thinner than Sean Connery's hair but the action is rapid-fire and the effects are first rate. The only real frustrations are the increasingly

perplexing plot and the pathetic inclusion of Tom Sawyer. Apparently Americans wouldn't watch it unless the writers grafted an American folk hero onto the team. Leaving his raft riding days behind Tom has become a sharpshooter for the Secret Service (see what we mean about the plot). Decent banter between the stars – Connery and Townsend especially – ensure that the silliness can be forgiven. **6/10**

EXTRAS: Deleted and extended scenes, three featurettes, trailers, TV spots and photos. **5/10**

VERDICT: Entertaining at its best, but with less wits than George Bush after a botched lobotomy operation at its worst. **A- NP**

EXTRA! EXTRA!

A league of their own

This featurette offers a fairly broad overview of the film's production, from Connery's casting to the construction of Nemo's "automobile". An inordinate amount of time is spent on costume design, but it does elicit one unintentional laugh – the designer says she made Dorian's clothing grey "probably because he was ashes inside". Um, his surname had nothing to do with it, then?



Bad Boys II

Director: Michael Bay **Starring:** Will Smith, Martin Lawrence, Jord Molla, Gabrielle Union, Peter Stormare, Theresa Randle **Distributor:** Columbia Tri Star **Out:** Now **Price:** \$39.95



FILM: Once, long ago, carbon paper was widely used to reproduce office documents. The message written on the top page would be embossed through the carbon-imprinted sheets, making each copy identical, yet weaker than the last. These pallid duplicates were called "carbon copies."

Bad Boys II is no worse than its predecessor, but it takes a trained eye to spot the differences. There is an evil drug lord, whose machinations are pit against a squabbling duo of police officers. The comedy timing of Will Smith and Martin Lawrence works well as the precocious pair are thrust through

chase scenes and gunfights. Their police captain is not happy with their on-the-job performance. The only cosmetic differences are: the villain is now Latino, not French, and the leading lady black, not white. In other words, you know what you're going to get without the menu. **6/10**

EXTRAS: A host of deleted scenes, a ten minute documentary looks at the many real-life stunts that pepper the film, a detailed doco about the visual effects, Production Diaries, six breakdowns of epic action scenes and more. **8/10**

VERDICT: A commentary track would have been awesome, but it just wasn't to be. Still, the extras as they stand are more than enough to keep any *Bad Boys* fan rapt. **A- JC**

EXTRA! EXTRA!

An extra large serving of deleted scenes

Seven scenes that didn't make the final cut are included here on this two disc set. None are particularly off, but it's easy to see how they were trimmed to maintain the pace of the film. Most amusing are sequences involving the bumbling Lawrence: we see a flashback to a dysfunctional anger-management group therapy session, plus an extended look at treatment of his bum injury in hospital.



**DVD
OF THE
MONTH**

"Who? Us? We didn't start the fire. Come here for a sec..."

Knight Rider Collection

Director: John Singleton **Starring:** David Hasselhoff, Edward Mulhare, Patricia McPherson, William Daniels **Distributor:** Universal **Out:** Now **Price:** \$28.95



FILM: It could be getting its much welcomed DVD release because of the new movie they're working on, or it might simply be because of the legion of fans that have been begging for it for years. Whatever the reason, one of the most loved television series' of the '80s has hit DVD and it plays just as well as ever.

Back before he hung his gut out for *Baywatch*, David Hasselhoff was one of the most popular guys on TV (hard to believe isn't it?). As Michael Knight, with his leather jacket and cooler

than ice attitude, he was half the reason we tuned in each week. The other half, of course, was for K.I.T.T. At the time, it was the car of many a young lad's dreams.

There are five episodes on the disc, the first being the two-parter pilot. The episodes may be a little campy – it was supposed to be – but it's also a real blast. **8/10**

EXTRAS: The lack of extras is odd is because you can bet the washed-up Hasselhoff would've jumped at the chance to do a commentary or interview. **1/10**

VERDICT: A must-have for fans – even without the extras. **B- JC**



EXTRA! EXTRA!

The thick plot

A young detective is ambushed during a police stakeout and left for dead. Luckily a local billionaire has selected the man to be the city's new crime-fighter and has revived him, altered his face and slapped a new name on his license. To aid him on his travels, the man renamed Michael Knight is given a one-of-a-kind talking car called K.I.T.T. Now which genius came up with this brilliant stuff?



Hey Dave, there's something alive under your shirt ...

Feedback

This month we talk about Pro Evo vs FIFA, demo discs and TimeSplitters 3!

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READING UP

I received an excellent Christmas present this year: a year's subscription to your mag. And I thought my wife couldn't stand the PS2. Anyway, I have a gripe.

Prior to Christmas I went to a "respected" videogames store to buy a soccer game. I found *Pro Evolution 3* and *FIFA 2004*. I took them both to the counter and asked which they thought was better. The first guy said "Ahh, hmm, I don't know, um, EA always makes good games, so maybe *FIFA*." He asked his mate "Ahh *FIFA* is better, it's made by

EA." Now, since receiving your mag I realise that they were completely wrong. Sure EA makes great games but in the competition for the best soccer game obviously PES is better. This experience is similar to a number of shopping expeditions I had prior to Christmas. Can I suggest that any store that wants to sell PlayStation games make your magazine required reading. It only takes an hour or two a month and it is a great read. Then the staff could help their customers with some useful information! I feel better now.

Trev, via email

Don't you think it's a better solution to have customers like yourself read the magazine? That way you always know the best games to buy and don't have to rely on anyone else. There are some retailers out there who do seem better informed than others, but noone's "knowledge" should be trusted over your own research. Keep it up - read OPS2 and play our demos!

NO MORE REPEATS

I have bought every issue of the OPS2 since day numero uno and think it's a great magazine in almost every way (and I mean that in the least brown-nosing, butt-kissing way possible). I say almost because as much as I love and look forward to the demo discs, they have been a bit of a weak point at times.

The early demo discs were average but once they went to the DVD case format, the demos have gotten better.

Having said that, what's with all the double-ups? Don't us loyal been-there-since-

Issue-one readers deserve something more than recycled material?

Well, after the number of double-ups I noticed this month, I thought I'd have a little look back at my previous 23 demo discs. My findings revealed 24 demos that appeared twice (17 playable and seven videos), and another three demos that appeared three times. That's 32 demo and video repeaters, which works out to about two full discs of repeats.

Okay, so sometimes you double-up for the latecomers or use lines like "With a sequel on the way, you better ready yourself with the original classic" or something like that. If people have an interest in an upcoming sequel, they have more often than not already played or own "the original classic". They just sound like excuses to put a repeater on the disc to fill it up.

Well, I am still going to continue my loyalty to OPS2, but it would be great if the demo discs were maybe a little more of a feature than what seems to be an afterthought at times. Until then, I just can't wait to run down to the newsagent next month.

Jai, via email

PS. Whoever does those captions for the screenshots throughout your mag is a comical genius, and I love your witty replies to Idiots (like the one I'll probably get).

After a compliment like that we're itching to poke fun at you, but, unfortunately you haven't said anything silly enough to let us really stick the boot in. We agree that a disc chock-full of never-before-seen demos would be the best way to go.

Unfortunately the games companies don't always have enough new games to pass on to us, no matter how hard we beg or how many Xbox fans we threaten to bash. Don't you think it's better to put a couple of repeats on the end of the disc than leave some of it blank? It's also worth remembering that not all PS2 owners are as hardcore as yourself. A little under half of our magazines are bought each month by regular readers. The rest are bought by more casual gamers who usually only fork out for 2-3 games a year. We think it's a good bet that these readers appreciate it when we repeat classic games from earlier discs. But ... look out for some nice "surprises" on our discs soon!

NUMBER ONE FAN

Your mag would have to be the best in the world. There are so many great things about it that I don't know where to start. First up I guess one of the great things about your mag is the demo disc. This gives the

reader the chance to play the game before rushing out to buy them, which is great because if you see an advertisement about a game and really want it, you can play the demo available with your mag and then make up your mind about if you want it or not. The second great thing about your magazine is the reviews. These are great for a second view at the game you want to buy. If it gets a bad rating, well then it's obviously crap, whereas a good rating makes it the perfect game.

Another thing about your mag is the depth that you go into the games you're reviewing. From the length of the game to the graphics - it's all good. The final great thing about your mag is the excellent competitions. The prizes are chosen really well, which makes more and more people want to enter. I'm sure there are heaps more excellent things about your mag, but this letter is getting a bit too lengthy. Keep up the good work guys.

Ben Jorgensen, via email

No you can't have a free game. Seriously though, thanks for the kind words.

CONSOLE ENVY

I was just reading over some of my older issues of OPS2 when I read about a certain "Xbox lover" in the Feedback section of issue 18. Get that man a doctor because he has got a serious problem with his head. If he is sending you hate mail just about a comment that you wrote in a magazine then he is not going to get far in life. If you have ever even flicked lightly through any Xbox magazine then you will realise that they are a really angry lot. You don't have to publish this because it's not really that important but please tell that stupid bastard to stop soaking to us and go make a friend with your big black box.

Jackson Dudez, via email

You know what they say. The bigger the box, the smaller the ...

ONLINE TIME

Me and my friends in New Zealand love *TimeSplitters 2* and when we were playing it, we noticed in the main menu that it features an online option. Did you guys in the OPS2 Towers know it's online? Could you do an online review?

Liam, via email

Were you smoking anything when you saw this option? We couldn't find it and no one at Free Radical Design (the guys who made the game) has heard of it either. Maybe what you saw was a vision of the future. TimeSplitters 3 is due late 2005 and we'll bet that it'll have online play.



Australia's best gadget magazine

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20 must-have gadgets with a retro twist



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RE-BOOT

Get more tips than a cab driver with complimentary champagne



Last issue we gave you priceless military training and then held your hand right to the end of the Midnight Raid on Guadalcanal mission. This month, our *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* playguide concludes by dragging you through the carnage of the final missions. Our gaming experts have also taken time out to share their winning *Need For Speed: Underground* techniques with you, as well as explain *Soul Calibur II*'s intricate ass-kicking action in intense thumb-busting detail. Pay attention, class, and we shall begin...

James Ellis

Tips Editor

IN RE-BOOT THIS MONTH...

84.....MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN.....TACTICS
86.....NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND.....TIPS
88.....SOUL CALIBUR II.....TACTICS
92.....LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING.....CHEATS
92.....TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA.....CHEATS
92.....FINDING NEMO.....CHEATS

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MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

PART
TWO

Copping more bullets than you're dishing out?

MISSION 5: PISTOL PETE SHOWDOWN

Head along the worn dirt path using your rifle to blast the very tough enemies that populate the jungle (go for the headshot if you can). Keep going until you reach the mounted gun. Use it to clean up the jungle a bit and then you'll meet Scotsman Clemens. Follow Clemens through a tunnel and to a save point.

Follow Clemens again to where the Allied Patrol are being kept prisoner. Kill their captors quickly and free the troops. Search the barracks and you'll soon meet Harrison who you'll need to escort to the various Pistol Pete weapons. Quickly run through the field to the left of the village where mortar shells will land around you and enemy soldiers will charge towards you down the hill. Keep shooting until you reach the top. At the top of the hill you can use the mortar cannon to wipe out mucho Japanese and even a tank. Just be careful that the tank doesn't get a bead on you otherwise it's all over. Collect the health and head down and to the west. Face a mounted gun and more troops. Kill them and cross the river using the bridge.

Run quickly to the mounted machine gun and use it to kill the troops that rush you from the jungle. Move forward and use the save point to the right. Keep going.

Follow the path up and around, but be careful of tougher troops popping up from spider holes. Soon you'll meet up with Clemens again. Cross the river. You'll now have the Thompson Machine Gun which helps. Fight your way forward until the path splits. Wait until Clemens catches up then follow him to the cave. Follow the cave along and up. At the top is a save point and the first Pistol Pete cannon. Destroy it. Go through the doorway, cross the bridge and follow the cave outside.

Kill the soldiers that snipe you from the stairwell scaffolding opposite. Cross the bridge and go up those same stairs. At the top make a mad dash for the bunker with the mounted gun before it can do too much damage. Kill everyone and stay back as your partner destroys Pistol Pete number two.

Head out the other exit and into an enemy-troop-choked hallway. Keep moving and shooting and follow the hallway to the end where it curves up and around. Cross the scaffolding bridge and destroy the final Pistol Pete. Outside there will be enemies everywhere. Keep moving and shooting across the long bridge to cue a tragic cutscene and the end of the level.

MISSION 6: SINGAPORE SLING

You need to stay as quiet as possible here, so use the silenced Welrod to take out the guards, move along to the next pier, and keep going until you meet up with your contact, Tanaka. After talking with Tanaka for a bit you'll take a Rickshaw ride that is abruptly stopped by a car crash. Use your pistol to gun down the Japanese troops who don't believe Tanaka's story. This section of the game will require quite a lot of sneaking and exploration. There is a save point to the left of a large gate. Use that and head back into the city, having your pistol ready

and loaded. Explore all the buildings (both upstairs and down) to rescue POWs and eventually you'll meet up with a British underground officer. Follow him.

You'll find yourself in a downstairs area with loads of Japanese to kill. Stay moving and you should be able to take them all out. Follow underground guy again until you reach an alley. Now you'll have to throw Caltrops (spikes) under Kandler's car. Do so and be treated to a scene where the car crashes. Go over to the car and steal Kandler's uniform. Use the save point on the stairs and continue to the roof.

The roof is a hotbed of Japanese troops. They're all pretty slick too so you'll need to take cover wherever possible and make sure all are dead before moving on.

Keep going, rescue another POW, jump down onto the roof and use the pile of boxes to get up on the other side. Use the fire escape to enter the building. Kill the Japanese troops inside, rescue another POW and meet up with Tanaka at the bottom before getting into the car. Tanaka will drive you to the hotel where everyone will believe you are Kandler, the German. Keep your weapons holstered so you don't dispel this illusion. Follow the white-suited toady and head upstairs and to the left. At the top you'll enter the Axis Summit.

After a lot of sabre-waving by the Japanese and the Germans the real Kandler will burst in rumbling your little game. Luckily underground boy will throw you a fancy new weapon for you to blow every one away with. After this do a runner.

The hotel is a scene of extreme chaos now so don't stop for anyone. Head downstairs, into the large room behind the foyer, and go right into the kitchen. Here you'll find a save point.

Up the stairs you'll meet up with your underground mate again. You'll have to take out a ludicrous number of Japanese and Germans all crowded into a corridor but happily, your new weapon seems to slide through them like butter. This gun is fun. Turn right and move onto the hotel balcony. Kill a few more troops and cue a cutscene of you jumping onto a bus.

MISSION 7: IN SEARCH OF YAMASHITA'S GOLD

Back in the jungle again you'll start off with a good load of weapons and believe us you're going to need them.

Move along the path killing enemy soldiers. When it splits into the high road and the low road, take the high road and cautiously snipe as many of the enemy as you can. This should make your way forward a little easier when you double-back and take the low road. Soon you'll find yourself in a pretty serious firefight. Make sure your favourite weapon is always loaded and ready. After you finish off the enemy you'll find a save point. You'll need it.

This next bit is hard: Three mounted guns and lots of random troops will attempt to stop you. Constantly shoot whoever mans the mounted guns with the Sniper Rifle and

chuck grenades wherever the enemy seems to congregate. Also, when things get tough, use cover to duck down and back up. After you've finished all of them off, move on. Follow the path along and you'll reach another save point.

You'll find the plane's crash site and Tanaka next. Keep moving forward and soon you'll find yourself at the gates of a spectacular-looking Buddhist Temple. From outside the gates use the Sniper Rifle to shoot the soldiers in the lookout posts. Then, and this can be a little tricky, run right up to the steps. This will activate a huge number of enemies who will come streaming down the steps, so run back and pick off as many as you can from a distance. When the way is clear run up the stairs, but beware of the mounted gun at the top. Some well-placed grenades should sort that puppy out. Keep on going inside the Temple and use the Sniper Rifle to take out the soldiers that are perched on the giant Buddha Statue. Smash the crates to your left (you'll probably be low on ammo by now) then head back to the right. What follows is a series of rooms full of soldiers. Your best bet is to stay back and take them out with the Sniper Rifle. What you can't snipe you can probably flush out with grenades and then shoot with whatever takes your fancy. Being gung-ho in this section is not a good idea. Just remain patient and don't panic. You'll kick open a set of doors. Head right down the corridor and use the save point. Then head back and kick open the next set of doors.

Follow the corridor along to yet another set of doors. These lead to an outside area brimming with the enemy. Tanaka is actually a great help here. Not because he's a great shot (he's not) but if you pay attention to where his bullets fly you can pinpoint the enemies that are better hidden. Use him as your guide to shoot who and when.

Go through the courtyard and down a hall. Open the first door for supplies. Then the next door will open into the mess hall. Kill the enemy while they eat! Continue on for a bit then – BOOM! – everything goes pear-shaped and you'll fall through the floor. Ironically enough you'll discover the gold. Kill the alerted Japanese guards and walk over the stairways down the hall into the detention area. This next part is mainly close-quarters combat so the shotgun is going to be your best bud from here on.

Keep going down the narrow corridor then turn right and rescue the pilot. Keep going to the end of the corridor and use the save point near the big reclining Buddha.

Double-back to the gold room and the door that was once closed is now open. Here the giant statue of Buddha is collapsing (be careful not to get skittled by its big falling head) and blast the enemies that get in your way. Keep running and don't stop for anything.

Eventually you'll reach some mounted guns that look out onto a large open area. Shoot everything, especially the barrels, and watch enemy troops drop like flies. Once you've wiped everything out you'll cue a cut scene and the end of the level.

MISSION 8: A BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

After the cutscene, in which you rather stupidly fall out of the plane, you'll find yourself alone and lost in the jungle. Move forward but beware of the Japanese soldiers hidden in the spider holes.



Cross the wooden bridge, being sure to blast the Japanese that below they can do the same to you. Keep moving but beware of the snipers that seem to always be on your upper right. They're hard to see so take your time and use cover wherever possible. Soon you'll reach some train tracks. Follow the tracks but keep an eye on the cliffs to your right. Kill enemies both on the ground and above you. Soon you'll collect the very handy T-11.

Kill the mortar guys to your right and the guy hiding behind the water tower (to your left) and double back to the path that goes up and to the right. Collect the goodies, use the mounted gun and head back down to the train tracks. A jeep on rails will approach full of enemy troops. Blast it off the rails.

Now you'll meet up with Chindits and some Australian soldiers with appalling accents. Follow the troops to the right where there is a break in the cliffs. Lots of troops await but also lots of health and goodies. Kill everyone then head back onto the tracks. Kill all the snipers (watch where the Aussies fire for a good idea of their location).

Head toward the path to the left where you'll find goodies and enemies in an abandoned POW camp. Check out the huts and kill all the snipers. Go back to the tracks.

Soon you'll reach a couple of lookout posts. Exterminate the troops then head left and down the hill. Make another quick left to access a save point. Then go back around. Walk along killing snipers and spider hole troops. You'll cross another bridge. Kill the Japanese and destroy their docks (by shooting the explosive barrels). Keep going. Man the mounted gun and kill all the soldiers who come out.

A little further and it's time to ride the elephant! Press Action to get on his back. Like pretty much every sequence in this game that involves a mounted gun the key here is to not stop shooting. Pay particular attention to the enemies on the cliffs, as they wield some very nasty artillery and extra health is going to be hard to come by from this point on.

Once the elephant ride is over, head left for another save point and kill two troops who are looking at the Bridge over the River Kwai itself. Head up the hill into the area with lookout posts and Japanese soldiers. Kill everyone quickly before they can get a bead on you then head up the hill where the crane sits. Get inside the crane and derail the train. Go back down and cross the bridge, using the burning train carriages as your way across. Be careful of snipers here as there's not much health and the troops are miffed that you've ruined their bridge.

As you go along the bridge, sniping the enemy before they can do the same, you have to release three fuel valves. Once this is done you'll meet up with Bromley. Follow Bromley to escape off the side of the bridge but beware of the last-ditch efforts of the enemy troops to blow you away. At the end of a carriage you'll jump off the adjacent bridge into the water. This will cue a cutscene and the end of the level.

MISSION 9: SUPERCARRIER SABOTAGE

This is the final mission in the game. It's not hard to figure out what to do but the execution can often be a real pain. It's also a very long level. Remember, though, you can always double back to get health you've left behind. Head down the stairs after the cutscene and follow the

corridors around using your silenced weapon to kill the enemies. Also look up at the air vents. Whenever there's a red vent bit with a switch you'll need to press Action. These are easy to miss so constantly keep an eye on what's going on above you.

Move through the corridors and pick up the T-99 in the locker room. This is a belter of a weapon, although sometimes a little hard to aim. Keep following the ship around and you'll reach the save point – use it and head downstairs. Enter the large fuel room and kill the enemy troops on the catwalk. Follow the fuel room around into a middle area. In this area you can break all four fuel valves. You'll then need to go into the four rooms (two each side) and release the final vents and shoot the fuel monitors.

After this is accomplished you'll meet Bromley back in the middle area. Follow him as he runs to the exit but hang back a bit. Three elite troops will come out of the exit door. If you stay back and use the T-99 on them you can take them out before they get a shot off. If, however, you blunder into them you're likely to end up as nothing more than a name on a war memorial. Run into the next room, find the gold and you'll automatically get gassed. Cue another cutscene.

After the cutscene you'll free yourself. Go and use the save point then head upstairs. This is where things get really tricky. You'll find yourself in the first of three hangars. The hangars are full of elite Japanese troops with automatic weapons. Try to pick them off from a distance but it's hard without the Sniper Rifle. Basically stay low and stay smart. When you've cleared the hangar of troops blast all the planes to pieces. The exit to the next hangar is on the other side of the area but you might want to go back and save again. Sure, it's time consuming, but so is doing all of what you just did again. Anyway, head outside and get ready to fight on the catwalks attached to the side of the ship. Move forward as slowly as possible and kill the black-suited MG troops before the white-suited sailors. Once the catwalk is cleared you can enter the next hangar via the far door.

Take this next bit very slowly. Poke your head around corners and shoot the black suits first. Then the sailors and finally the planes. Go up the narrow stairs and press the button to open up access to the third hangar.

Once again it might be a good idea to head back to the save point. Annoying, certainly, but things are a bit rough up ahead. Regardless, go through the newly opened doors to the third hangar. Kill the troops, then the planes then head up the stairs. You'll be on the side of the ship again so take it slowly. Bust open crates if you're low on ammo or health, there's often something of use in there. Make your way along, careful not to expose yourself too much, and enter the door at the end of the catwalk. Head up the stairs. This floor shouldn't present too much of a problem as sailors basically stumble around corners into your line of fire. Just make sure to reload your weapon after each encounter and you should make it to the end of this floor without too much trouble. Head up the next set of stairs.

Be ready for black-suited MG Japanese. Take them out quickly and use the save point (praise the Lord!) to your left. Keep on going, cautiously, and clear the floor of enemies. Head up the stairs and onto the bridge of the ship. This is basically the last bit of fighting you'll be doing so you can imagine it's going to be pretty tough. Same rules apply as normal – just stay back, use cover and make sure you're always loaded. Soon you'll make your way out onto the deck of the ship and into a plane!

In this final action sequence you'll control the gunner portion of the plane as enemy fighters launch from an aircraft carrier and try to take you out. You'll have to destroy a lot of them, and yes they can be pretty hard to hit, but it seems rare that you'll take damage in this section so you might as well have a good time. When enough of the enemy fighters have gone down in screaming orange plumes of fire the carrier will erupt like an oceanic volcano and you'll cue a cutscene that will set up the next *Medal of Honor* game where you'll be off to find your brother. Well done soldier, you're finished!

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

Expert techniques to help you become the King of the Underground

SAFE SPEEDING

Pro tips to push you ahead of the pack

■ **DRAG RACING** – Well-timed gear changes are critical here. Drag races can only be played with manuals rather than automatics so you'll have to keep one eye on the revs and the other on the road. To pull off the perfect start you want the needle to be at about 75% and rising when the girls start the race. Wait until the needle flashes green, slam it into the next gear and hold on tight.

■ **NITROUS** – You won't unlock this car part until you're about 25% of the way through the game, but when you do they'll need a paint scraper to peel you off the back of the seats. Using it in the regular races is pretty straightforward – wait for a straight then let it rip. It's also best to save the nitrous if you're leading, then unleash it if you get overtaken. When using nitrous in the Drag mode you should avoid using it until you've changed through the gears because too long a burst will blow your engine. It's best used in short bursts after each gear change to get your revs back up quickly.

■ **DRAFTING** – Unless you've pulled off a perfect start then you'll be able to take advantage of some extra speed by drafting the other players. To draft all you need to do is pull your car in behind one of the leading cars and slipstream them. You will get bonus points flashing up on screen when you pull this off correctly.

■ **SHORT-CUTS** – All of the Circuit and Sprint courses have short-cuts that can be taken to shave precious seconds off your times. Most of the short-cuts will appear on your map but some won't. Keep an eye out for any weak-looking walls, gates or barricades that you might be able to smash through. It's also worth evaluating some short-cuts because not all of them are worth the trouble.

■ **HARD-DRIVING** – All of the challenges in the Underground mode have Easy, Medium and Hard selections. You should choose Hard as the default because it gives you more cash and car parts. However, if you are having trouble with any specific event, remember you can always drop the difficulty level.

■ **GOING UNDERGROUND** – This is the main mode of the game used for unlocking tracks and cars. We recommend starting with the Mazda as it offers a good mix of handling and speed. You won't be able to buy any spare parts at the beginning but you will unlock them at the end of many races. Every part you unlock should be bought and installed (selecting the Hard challenges is the best for this). When you unlock new cars you can trade your old one in and transfer all of your upgrades to your new ride.

■ **BLING BLING** – Style points also come into play in NFS: Underground. Some events won't even let you roll onto the starting line until you have enough style. To collect style points for your car go into the car "Customize Ride" section when playing the Underground mode and purchase all of the parts in the "Visual" section that you can afford. Start off with big parts like spoilers and air scoops before moving on to Vinyl stickers and neon lights for the underside of your ride.

■ **DRIFTERS** – The Drift racing mode rewards players for the most outrageous powerslides possible. Look for the 'zebra crossing' white stripes on either side of the track – sliding on these (as close to the barrier as possible) radically increases the points for your slides. To initiate a slide simply turn sharply and hit the handbrake at the same time. Hold the slide for as long as possible, hitting the handbrake to change the angle of your slide and swerve around multiple corners.



left turn. Hit the brake for a second here as you start to turn, then ease off the accelerator a little to make it around. The next corner can be taken at full speed.

There is another short-cut on the right (through a small park) just before a long right corner. Again, this is a tough short-cut so you may want to avoid it sometimes. On your first lap it's probably best to avoid it because there will be no traffic on the corner. On the second and third laps it's better to take it to avoid the traffic. When taking the short-cut, brake just before you get to it on your map, then corner wide so that you can use the left wall to brace you. Stay between the left wall and the concrete sections. To take the corner without the short-cut just release the accelerator a couple of times.

Always take the road to the right at the next fork in the road. When you come up to the next corner hug in very tight to the inside so you can cut through what looks like a Chinese restaurant (it has orange paving stones out the front). Taking this mini short-cut will allow you to use the small wall on your left to curve you around the corner at full speed.

You can make it through the rest of Chinatown at full speed. Make sure you are lined up straight when taking the jump. On the last corner of the track (to the right) you can hug the inside and cut through the petrol station, using the low concrete wall to bounce you around the corner (like at the Chinese restaurant).

TOUGH TRACKS

We've gone over each of the tough tracks with a magnifying glass to give you the details on every corner and short-cut!

NATIONAL RAIL (CIRCUIT)

About 50 metres after you start you will see the Stafford East Station on your left. Smash through the metal gates here and take this short-cut. After you come out of the first tunnel you should pull to the left onto the train tracks because there's a lot less garbage in your way than there is on the platform. Turn off the tracks and take the second tunnel to the right just before the concrete. As soon as you come out of the tunnel you should tap the brake to make it around the harsh left turn. You should be able to make it around the right turn immediately after this at full speed. Tap the brake again when going into the junkyard to the left (at the end of the straight). You can make it through the junkyard at full speed but you will need to ease off the accelerator when taking the right turn out of it. Take the left path when the road splits ahead and keep to the right side of the road to avoid the oncoming traffic. The traffic is

lighter on the other road to the right if you are having trouble with this path. When going through the tunnel always stick to the inside of the corners between the wall and the pillars. Stick to the right when leaving the tunnel to make it around the corner and across the finish line.

MARKET STREET (CIRCUIT)

Take the first easy right, making sure to draft behind the other racers and avoid the traffic on the left side of the bend. When you are going down the straight watch out for the tram in the middle of the road. Just after the tram you should look for a Chinese gate on your left that can be used as a short-cut around the next corner.

The next couple of corners can be taken with a slight pumping of the accelerator. After this there is a short-cut on your right. Do not take it unless you are a very confident driver. It's extremely easy to hit the post on the left as you drive onto the wooden path. If you are going to take it make sure you tap the brake and ease off the accelerator to make it around. If you're not going to take the short-cut, releasing the accelerator a couple of times will be enough to get you around.

As you leave the grassy area you will come to a sharp

MAIN STREET (DRAG)

This description assumes you are playing with Maximum traffic. Start slapping through the gears as you head down the hill – with nitrous you should be able to get through all of the gear changes before you get to any of the traffic. Head to the right of the first pack of cars and take the ramp on the right rather than the motorway in





The city by night – perfect for illegal supercar racing



Drag races are all about not hitting the other drivers

the middle. The ramp is pretty narrow so keep your turning movements to a minimum to avoid hitting either side and spinning out. As you leave the ramp move over to the left (before the two cars) and take the left side as the road splits. Keep close to the right wall here and keep it straight.

BEDARD BRIDGE (SPRINT)

You can cruise around the first bend to the right at full speed. After this watch out for a big gate. Immediately after this you should peel off to the left and take the short-cut through the skate park. Make sure you keep it straight when going over the jump through the park though or things will get messy. Speed through the next corner at full speed. Take the path to the right when the road splits and keep to the inside to avoid traffic.

After speeding around the corner to the left you should keep an eye out for the brief short-cut to the right when taking the corner into the tunnel. Hug the inside walls when going through the tunnel to avoid the pillars and the traffic. Brake heavily for the sharp right turn when coming out of the tunnel. Tap the accelerator five or six times when coming around the slow bend to the left, then take the short-cut over the orange pavers on the next corner (you can do this at full speed).

Release the accelerator a couple of times when coming around the next right, then take the narrow tunnel in the middle of the road to avoid traffic on either side. You will need to brake a little when coming out of the tunnel to make it around the corner. Keep switching sides to stay on the inside of the corners during the section with the broken median strip. The entire storm drain section can be taken at full speed except for the corner to

the right after the pillars (which you should go through the middle of). Tap the accelerator a couple of times and you will make it around.

The next corner to the left looks very sharp but ease off the accelerator and you'll make it. Do the same for the next corner to the right, then take the path to the right when the road splits. Keep your eye out for the short-cut about a hundred metres after the split (it's not marked on your map). The short-cut is to your right when you see a red billboard to your left. You will have to brake a little to make it into the short-cut but it will give you a much better angle leading up to the finish line than the normal road.

9TH & FREY (SPRINT)

Take the right path when the road splits. You'll easily make it around the first couple of bends but will need to release the accelerator for a moment when going around the long bend to the left. Go to the right of the first two pillars, then to the left of the second two. You will be able to make it around the next long bend to the left at full speed. For the second set of pillars go to the left of the first two, to the right of the next two and then to the left of the last one. When going through the tight lane ahead, keep your turns to a minimum and make them very slowly. Any sudden movements with the wheel will be disastrous, especially when going over the jump at the end. Smash through the barriers at the end and start turning to the left early. When going down the steep hill it is again critical to make no sharp turns while making this series of jumps.

You'll need to squeeze the brake when going around the turn to the right at the bottom of the hill. About a

hundred metres after this look for a short-cut to the right. You will see a ramp leading up to some construction. Take this ramp, making sure you're right in its centre, but drifting ever so slightly to the left when you jump through the air to make it through the tight exit path. Taking this path will save you a second and is good for making up time if you are losing. However, if you're having trouble with it – or you're in first place on the last lap – you may not want to risk it. Instead of the short-cut you can follow the road as it bends to the right (tapping the accelerator a couple of times to make it around).

When you take the next left make sure you stick to the far left side to avoid the oncoming traffic. As you take the next left you will want to drift over to the right side of the road (quickly to avoid the trees in the middle). Stay on the right side of the road around the next few bends (which can all be taken at full speed). Watch for the flashing arrows directing you down a very narrow alley into a storm drain. Follow the drain along at top speed. When you see two massive pillars, drive between them, then get ready to release the accelerator to make it around the corner to the right. You can make the next corner to the right (exiting the drain) at full speed but you will have to release the accelerator a little to make it around the last left before the finish line. Not too difficult though.

That does it for the track descriptions and breakdowns. The only thing left for you to do is supe up your car and put in plenty of practice so you can achieve some freakish times, as well as race online. Good luck.



Drive close to pillars to save precious time ... but don't get too close!

SOUL CALIBUR II

Think fighting games are just about bashing buttons? Read and learn!

Getting continuously slain by cocky inebriated flatmates? Rejoice! This seer-forged tactics guide will turn you into an invincible uber knight. Just make sure you keep it to yourself.

KEY

- A** Horizontal Attack
- B** Vertical Attack
- K** Kick
- G** Guard

RULE 1 LEARN THE DANCE OF DEATH

Soul Calibur II incorporates complete eight-way movement into its fighting engine. Holding down any direction will set your character off into that corresponding space; allowing you to back away, move in, and circle your opponents with ease. Continuous sidestepping makes you a lot tougher to hit and opens up a canyon full of counter-attacking possibilities. Bottom line: Continuously move throughout bouts.

RULE 2 EFFICIENCY OVER STYLE

Special moves might make you look "the business", but true mastery of the game means knowing how to use the standard slashes and kicks to maximum effect. In general, horizontal attacks are faster than the vertical variations, with kicks falling somewhere in between. More importantly, each attack in combination with one of the eight directions yields a different strike. Attacking while

using Eight-Way Movement also performs a different move. Pressing down/towards+B with most characters for instance will cause them to perform a launcher that flings their opponent into the air (see Rule 8). Towards+B will cause your fighter to stab at the opponent giving you a reasonably speedy attack at range, and tapping K while sidestepping down will have them perform a sweep. While there are exceptions, these attacks are fairly standard across the board. Learn them.

RULE 3 GET ROCK SOLID

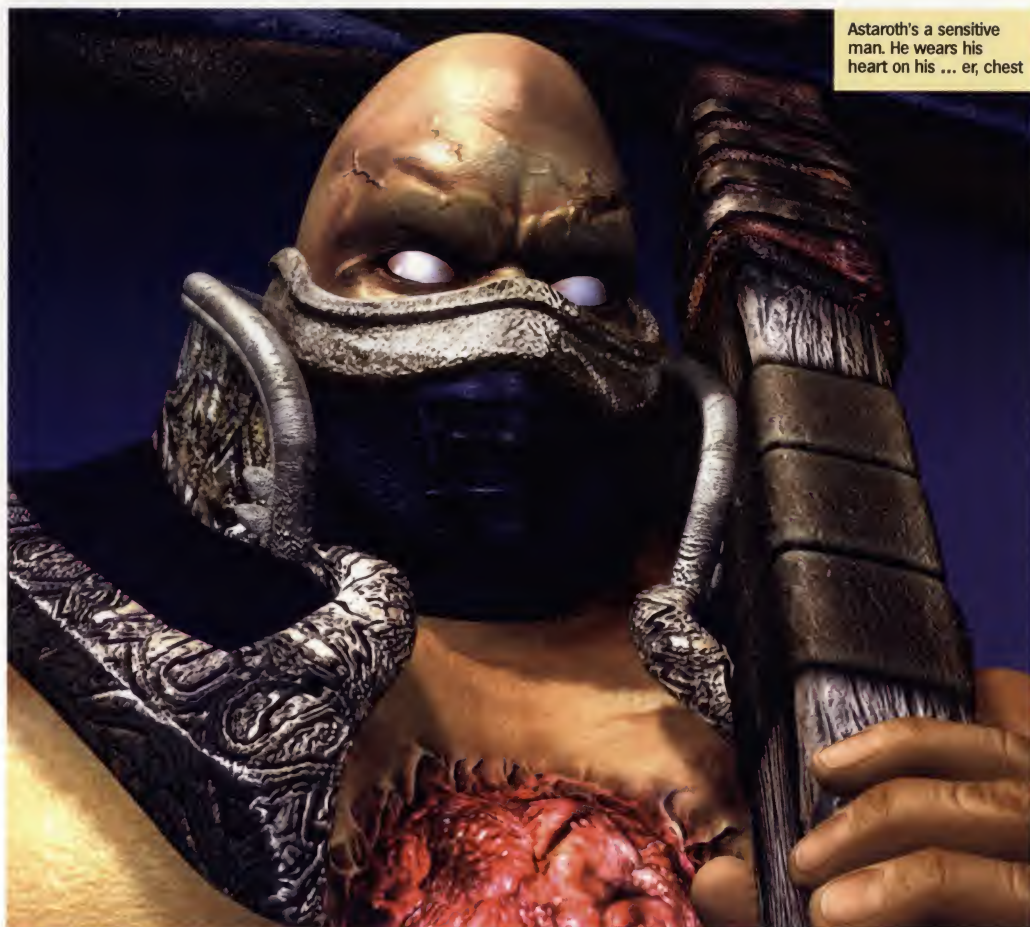
Often ignored by casual players, guarding will save your skin from rampant button mashers. To get to grips with defence, know you can be hit frontally in four different places; low, special-mid (knees), mid, and high (to see where an attack strikes go into Practice Mode and perform it on a dummy). High guard is performed by standing and simply holding G. It protects against everything except low attacks, the sweep (Down+K) being the prime example. The low guard, (Down+G) protects from low and s-mid attacks, and also prevents you from being thrown (note some characters like Nightmare have the ability to throw crouched opponents). When being pummelled, bunker up with high guard, then duck down into low guard if you spot an often slower low attack coming your way.

Remember that guarding has its limitations. While you can avoid conceding damage against standard attacks, opponents can still throw you if you're standing close to each other. If they're zoning in for a throw, either duck, go for a throw yourself, or dish out a couple of fast A strikes

to force their distance. Note you can move while guarding, albeit only a slow shuffle.

RULE 4 DAZZLE YOUR FOES

The term Special Move has been a staple of fighting game lingo for years, but in *SCII* it's a little harder to define. Apart from single-button moves, pressing combinations of the attack buttons on their own and with directions on the pad can cause your fighter to perform some impressive and powerful strikes. A lot of these can also be used to start combinations. Mastery of each character requires 1) knowing a wide variety of their moves and 2) when to use these moves. The first demand can be worked out in the game's Practice Mode, the latter can only be learned through fighting experience. Take one character at a time, (we'd recommend starting with a balanced character like Mitsurugi) into the Arcade Mode on a decent difficulty (at least Normal) and start applying the moves you've learnt. You'll quickly suss out their pros and cons. Note the following: how long does the move take to perform, how



Astaroth's a sensitive man. He wears his heart on his ... er, chest



far away should you be when performing the move, does it strike the opponent high or low, does it lead into a combo and does it have an alternate version that could confuse the player. For instance pressing A+B, then B with Cervantes causes him to spin his swords around like a windmill, finishing with a mid attack. But finishing with A instead of B will cause him to finish with a low attack instead. Commonsense dictates that the best special moves and combos are ones that are fast and powerful, fast and low and/or mix up both high and low strikes.

RULE 5 AVOID FIRE

Amidst the violent line-up of moves a certain subsection stand out as more brilliant, exciting and deadly than the rest. Unblockables are the slashes and slogs that cloud the air with fiery auras as they're unleashed and, as the name implies, cannot be blocked, parried or repelled. Knowing when it's safe to use these moves is also a question of experience. Performing them close to opponents is undesirable as they leave you wide open to attack. The best opportunity for landing such a match-turning blow usually occurs after you've knocked an enemy down into a corner and can charge up a horizontal unblockable that's difficult to sidestep. However, you can cancel out of the moves by pressing the Guard button, allowing you some sneaky dummy plays. As a side note, some characters, like Ivy and Astaroth, have better unblockables than others – milk their abilities.

RULE 6 IT'S THE MASTER'S DOMAIN

Parrying and repelling are counter-attacking techniques. While good players can use them in free play against tough opposition, they're also great for thwarting foes who flog the same moves over and over again. To execute one successfully you must judge when an enemy's hit will land, and perform either the repel (towards + Guard) or parry (back + Guard). Which one should you use? Repels counter high, mid and s-mid attacks, whereas parries counter mid, s-mid and low attacks. If you watch out for the high kicks, and horizontal attacks through ducking and keeping your distance you'll be able to mainly rely on parrying. Alternatively, you could watch out for low strikes and rely on repelling – the choice is yours. Realise, however, that constantly parrying and repelling is difficult, and as such these techniques shouldn't take strategic precedence over sophisticated attack.

Once you've performed a parry you have a limited window of opportunity to attack your opponent. Most players will go for the throw as it's easy, looks good and does decent damage. However, if this strategy is used too often opposing players may be able to anticipate the attack and break the throw (throws are performed by pressing A or B + Guard – to break free guess which attack button your foe has used and hit it as soon as you're grabbed). The other option is to perform a fast powerful attack. Make sure you know one for the character you're using.

RULE 7 IT'S ALL ABOUT SOUL

To perform a Soul Charge press all the attack buttons



Without his armour on, Nightmare looks like a dropped meat pie

simultaneously. By default the Soul Charge will be assigned to a shoulder button on the control pad, so don't worry about stretching your fingers. This technique, like the unblockables, requires time to perform on account of how vulnerable you become during charge up. After it's complete, however, your attacks will have increased damage or combination potential for a short time, or until you're hit.

RULE 8 WIN AT WHATEVER COST

Juggling is an advanced technique that promises to gain you victories but lose you friends. It involves launching your opponent into the air then continuously attacking their unguarded body. While there are many ways to get your foe into this position, the standard launcher attack is down/towards+B. Once in the air they have no choice but to take a bonus strike or two on the chin. Often you can even juggle opponents out of the ring for a disgracefully cheap victory.

Ring outs, the other popular way to win a round besides the KO, can come about through many strategies – the juggle is only one. Most characters have moves or kicks in their arsenal that can shift opponents around or

out of the ring. Backing your foes into a corner then performing these moves may be super-cheeky, but it's also enjoyable – especially when your opponent's next hit would've been their winning blow.

CHARACTER CLASSES

If you want to be an indestructible sword-swinging menace you'll have to be familiar with all the characters in the game. To help you along we've divided the characters into groups based on their best attacking strategy. Use the following to learn each character's strengths and weaknesses – handy for when you're using them, and also taking them on.

RANGE AND SPEED

■ KILIK

■ SEUNG MINA

These two staff-swinging warriors have a decent assortment of combos and juggles, but their obvious strength is the long weapons they use to deliver fast pokes and sweeps.

When using them, keep your distance and mix up your long range attacks, using A strikes when the enemy starts to sidestep. Also use their debilitating low A attacks on



This move could win an Olympic gold medal as well as the fight



A low dashing parry straight to the kneecap – that's gotta hurt!



Taunting before each fight is an important part ofSCII etiquette



Yes! K.O! Now rush in and hit her about before she falls over!



If that hit connects, it should really slice Raphael's legs off



The Soul Edge is more than just an ugly sword made of guts



Taki doesn't use a fork when she eats - just two knives. Crazy!

encroaching enemies to sweep them off their feet. If you find yourself backed up against the edge of the ring, both characters can perform a Dirty Bow (down/back + A+B) which can flip an attacking opponent over your head for a life-saving ring out.

RANGE AND POWER

- ASTAROTH
- IVY
- NIGHTMARE
- BERSERKER

Hold on to your sheaths, these boys (and naughty girl) hit hard. While this group consists of some very different fighters, they all share the common trait of being relatively weak up close. Find the fastest close-quarters move each

character has and use that or a throw (the throw is preferable) whenever things get too close for comfort. On the positive side, these characters possess some ground-shaking smashes that'll clear a health bar in seconds. Learn a handful of big hits that you can unleash from a fair to medium distance and go to town on your foe.

Nightmare has some particularly nasty low attack combos that'll catch any player by surprise, ending the round in moments. Ivy is one of the more technical characters in the game and can perform stunning whip combos and screen-filling unblockables at great range. Astaroth and Berserker can grab opponents from out of the air or on the ground to deal out follow-up punishment, also having awesome range when attempting throws.

ANYTHING GOES

- VOLD0
- YOSHIMITSU
- CERVANTES
- NECRID

These guys make one motley crew. They're endowed with explosive power and disorientating special moves that cause them to stand out in the character roster.

Voldo, like Ivy, is incredibly complex to use as his moves rarely follow general suite. To wield him well you'll need to get used to controlling his backward Blind Stance from where he can launch his Freak Roll attack. He can also make like an insect, using his Mantis Crawl, allowing him to keep low and quickly move around the arena. Learn all his stances and related moves then bombard your foe with his disconcerting arsenal. Cervantes has a long list of supernatural moves, including his Geo Da Ray that launches him from one side of the arena to the other. Like Voldo, your fastest way to victory is through constant attack using all his phenomenally overpowered moves, smashing opponents to the ground and then impaling them when they're down. Same point goes for Necrid who has a selection of close and long-range power moves and combos that make him a force to be reckoned with. Alternate between furious close-quarters combat and long-range power strikes. Yoshimitsu can replenish lost health and can teleport around attacks. Combine his crazy moves with the more cautious tactics from the Balanced group.



"Mnuummm! I made a meff wif muh fticky pape again!"



Why do ladies like to colour their hair purple when it turns grey?

BALANCED

- MITSURUGI
- RAPHAEL
- MAXI
- YUNSUNG
- ASSASSIN

The above fighters are best suited to a mix of defence and mid-range attacks. They can produce fairly powerful blows over medium distance, but also leave themselves vulnerable if their attacks are blocked or miss. Constant movement and strong defence will yield some good attacking opportunities. When these occur, try and capitalise on them as much as possible, following through with combinations and juggles. Additionally, all of these fighters possess some very strong forward thrusts that cover ground quickly and knock opponents down. Use them against charging attackers before moving in for a follow-up attack.

Maxi, Yunsung and Assassin stand out from the pack when it comes to their kicking ability, enabling them to move opponents around and out of the ring as well as complete attack combinations. Raphael's style depends on him not over-attacking, and using his fast hi-low horizontal combo (A, A+Down) to keep the fight from a close-in brawl. Mitsurugi has a number of useful stances as well as the dangerous shin-cutting Bill of Fire (Back+A+B, A+B). His array of fast upward vertical attacks can also cause considerable damage to grounded enemies.

COUNTER-ATTACKING

- LIZARDMAN
- CASSANDRA
- SOPHITIA
- HEIHACHI

This group possesses some fast attacks, but aren't as light on their feet as the Quick group who can sidestep around their foes to get into close range. Subsequently this Counter-attacking group's greatest challenge is getting up close where they're at their most dangerous.

To do this, block a slow- to medium-paced enemy attack from mid-range then rush in and try to get away a launcher or combo starter before you get thrown. Continuously look for throw opportunities when in close to keep your foe attacking and therefore the counter-attacking opportunities coming.

Lizardman possesses an incredibly fast and powerful headbutt that can easily knock foes out of the arena, while also sharing with Cassandra and Sophitia slews of disconcerting combos that alternate between high and low attacks. Heihachi's best assets are his darting fists that can cover medium ground well, his jaw-splintering uppercut, and his lengthy combos. Don't try and learn all his multiple-hit combos in one day – you'll find that knowing just one makes you deadly.



QUICK

- XIANGHUA
- TALIM
- TAKI

The secret to success here is to get in close and alternate between hitting high and low. These gals possess lightning-quick attacks that can be chained together at close range. They're light on their feet too, meaning dodging and sidestepping a path to your opponent's soon to be severed nose isn't difficult. Learn some of their cheeky low-hitting strikes and mix these in with their regular fast attacks to cause problems for your opponent. You'll find that so long as you're not predictable with your attack combos you'll be difficult to parry or repel. Also, and this goes without saying, try to perform some throws when you get close enough to your opponent.

Xianghua has some great combos that start high but sneakily wind up taking out foes' ankles, while Talim blitzes you with sheer weapon speed and a mix of fast knockdown attacks. Taki has fantastic aerobic moves, enabling you to roll and jump around opponents till you're presented with opportunities for side throws and launchers. Use her Possession stance (roll down to back) to gain access to a new range of tricky moves.

CODE-U-LIKE

Need to cheat your way to victory on a certain game? Write to us and we'll ease your pain.

THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN (SLES 518976)

In the Options menu hold L1+R1 and enter the following:

All reward Cars
X, O, X, O

Credits
X, O, O, A

Speedometer display
A, A, O, O

Brick Car
O, O, A, O

Tripping mode
A, O, A, O

Night time mode
X, X, X, X

Blow up vehicles in one hit
A, A, O, O

Faster cars
O, O, O, O

Fastest cars
A, A, A, A

Infinite car health
A, X, A, X

Press horn to do a huge leap in your car
O, O, O, A

More camera angles
O, O, O, X

Grid mode
O, X, O, A

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN (SLES 518731)

Go to the Options menu and select passwords:

To Unlock All Levels
BUTTERFLY

To Unlock Max Ammo
GOBY

To Unlock Men with Hats
SEAHORSE

To Unlock Silver Bullet Mode
TILEFISH

To Unlock Big Arms
SPINEFOOT

To Unlock All Replay Items
Garibaldi

To Unlock Perfectionist
HOGFISH

To Unlock Invisible Soldiers
TRIGGER

To Unlock Bullet Shield Mode
TANG

To Unlock Sniper Mode
PUFFER

To Unlock Rubber Grenades DAMSEL

To Unlock Head Shots Only
MANDARIN

TRUE CRIME STREETS OF LA (SLES 517532)

Enter these while on the Pause menu:

All Driving Upgrades Unlocked
↑, →, ←, →, X

All Fighting Moves Unlocked
↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, X

All Gunplay Skills Unlocked
→, ←, →, ←, X

Bigger Car (must be in car before you enter it on the pause menu)
↓, ↓, ↓, X

Boost
↑, X, X, X

Impound garage cars unlocked
↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, X

Shows Nick Kang's Current Location
X, O, O, A

Smaller car
↑, ↑, ↑, X

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING (SLES 520176)

For 1000 Experience Points

Pause the game and hold all four shoulder buttons and then enter one of the following codes, depending on which character you are playing as. This code can be used as many times as you want.

Aragorn
↑, O, A, X

Frodo
↑, A, ↑, ↓

Gandalf
O, A, ↑, ↓

Gimli
O, O, A, X

Legolas
X, A, ↑, X

Sam
A, X, ↓, X

FINDING NEMO (SLES 517554)

Enter these on the New Game screen:

Bonus Level

A, O, O, O, O, A, A, O, O, O,
O, A, A, O, O, A, O, O, O, O,
A

End Credits

A, O, O, A, A, O, O, A, O, O,
A, O, O, O, A, O, O, A, O, O,
O, A, O, O

Invincibility

A, O, O, O, O, O, A, A, O, O,
O, O, O, O, O, O, A, O, O, O,
O, O, A, O, O, O, O, O, A, O,
O, O, O, O, A

Unlock all levels

A, A, A, O, O, O, O, A, O, O,
A, O, A, O, A, O, O, A, A

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY (SLES 51707)

At the Main Menu press, (where New Game and Continue is)

Infinite Ammo
↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, →, ↓, ←, O, O

Invulnerability
↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, ←, →, →, O, O, O,
O, O, O

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND (SLES 51967)

Unlock All Drag Tracks
→, O, ←, O, O, O, O, O

Unlock All Drift Tracks
←, ←, ←, ←, →, O, O, O

Unlock All Circuit Tracks
↓, O, O, O, O, O, O, O

Unlock All Sprint Tracks
↑, O, O, O, O, ↓, ↓, ↓

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13111	Spongebob Squarepants	Level Select
08261	Star Wars The Clone Wars	Invicibility
08262	Star Wars The Clone Wars	Skip Level
08263	Star Wars The Clone Wars	Campaign Level Select
04801	Aggressive Inline	All Levels
04802	Aggressive Inline	All Secret Characters
04803	Aggressive Inline	Super Spin
18730	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Unlock All Levels
18731	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Unlock Max Ammo
18732	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Bullet Shield Mode
18733	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Sniper Mode
18734	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Silver Bullet Mode
20171	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Aragorn
20172	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Frodo
20173	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Gandalf
20174	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Gimli
20175	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Legolas
20176	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Sam
17531	True Crime Streets of LA	All Driving Upgrades
17532	True Crime Streets of LA	All Fighting Moves
17533	True Crime Streets of LA	All Gunplay Skills
17534	True Crime Streets of LA	Impound Garage Cars Unlocked
18971	Simpsons Hit & Run	All Reward Cars
18972	Simpsons Hit & Run	Infinite Car Health
18973	Simpsons Hit & Run	Faster Cars
18974	Simpsons Hit & Run	Jumping Car
18975	Simpsons Hit & Run	Blow up Vehicles In one Hit
18976	Simpsons Hit & Run	Night Time Mode
19671	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Drag Tracks
19672	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Drift Tracks
19673	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Circuit Tracks
19674	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Sprint Tracks
20177	LOTR: The Return of the King	All Upgrades
20178	LOTR: The Return of the King	Always Devasting
20179	LOTR: The Return of the King	Infinite Missles
20180	LOTR: The Return of the King	Invulnerable
20181	LOTR: The Return of the King	Perfect Mode
20182	LOTR: The Return of the King	Restore Health
18481	Tony Hawks: Underground	Faster Speed
18482	Tony Hawks: Underground	Moon Gravity
18483	Tony Hawks: Underground	Perfect Manuals
18484	Tony Hawks: Underground	Perfect Rall Balance
18485	Tony Hawks: Underground	Unlocks All Thug Movies
17071	Secret Weapons Over Normandy	Infinite Ammo
17072	Secret Weapons Over Normandy	Invulnerability
17551	Finding Nemo	Bonus Level
17552	Finding Nemo	End Credits
17553	Finding Nemo	God Mode
17554	Finding Nemo	Level Select
10641	Gladius	Equip Anything
14741	Blood Rayne	God Mode
14742	Blood Rayne	Fill Bloodlust
14743	Blood Rayne	Time Factor
14744	Blood Rayne	Level Select
14745	Blood Rayne	Enemy Freeze
14746	Blood Rayne	Show Weapons
14747	Blood Rayne	Gratuitous Dismemberment
14748	Blood Rayne	Juggy
12572	The Sims	All Objects Free
12573	The Sims	Unlock Party Motel
11301	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Matrix Cheat
11302	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Unlock Skaters
11303	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Perfect Ralls
11304	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Perfect Manuals
06791	Tenchu 3 Wrath of Heaven	All Characters
06792	Tenchu 3 Wrath of Heaven	All Misslons
06793	Tenchu 3 Wrath of Heaven	Unlock all Items
06794	Tenchu 3 Wrath of Heaven	Increase Items
12521	Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Refill Your Health
12522	Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Full Arrows/Axes
09923	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	All Weapons
09921	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Level Skip
09922	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	God Mode
09021	Conflict Desert Storm	Cheat Menu
12821	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	Unlock all Courses
12822	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	Unlock all Golfers
12201	Ty The Tasmanian Tiger	Show All Items
12202	Ty The Tasmanian Tiger	Unlock all Technorangs
06721	Baldurs Gate Dark Alliance	Invicibility and Level warp
06722	Baldurs Gate Dark Alliance	Super Character
05921	No One Lives Forever	Level Select
07391	Soldier of Fortune Gold Edition	Invicibility
07392	Soldier of Fortune Gold Edition	Full Ammo
07393	Soldier of Fortune Gold Edition	Heavy Weapons
07394	Soldier of Fortune Gold Edition	Hand to Hand & Explosive Weapons
07951	Superman Shadow of Akropolis	Infinite Super Power
07952	Superman Shadow of Akropolis	Infinite Health
07953	Superman Shadow of Akropolis	Unlock All Movies
07954	Superman Shadow of Akropolis	Unlock All Biographies
07891	Men In Black 2 Alien Escape	Invicibility
07892	Men In Black 2 Alien Escape	Level Select
07893	Men In Black 2 Alien Escape	All Weapons
07894	Men In Black 2 Alien Escape	Full Beam
07895	Men In Black 2 Alien Escape	Full Homing
03971	Prisoner of War	Unlimited Goodies
03972	Prisoner of War	All Chapters
12271	Tomb Raider Angel of Darkness	Level Skip
12131	World of Outlaws SprintCars	Money
12132	World of Outlaws SprintCars	All Drivers
12133	World of Outlaws SprintCars	All Tracks

gamestation

Your definitive guide to the ever expanding library of PlayStation 2 games.



So you've just bought a PlayStation 2, and you're confronted by a dauntingly huge line-up of games to choose from at your local gaming store. Now what? GameStation is OPS2's one-stop guide to getting an idea of what's hot and what's not. As time goes on and new games come out, we drop some of the older games that don't warrant being remembered, replacing them with newer games that score well in the reviews section.

As PlayStation 2 owners we really are spoiled for choice. There are a massive choice of AAA quality games – many of which are bound to fall under your radar. OPS2 is here to make sure that not too many of them manage to slip through your fingers.

If you just want to find the best of the best, look for the games that receive a Bronze, Silver or Gold award. Enjoy your search.

GLOSSARY

Just got your PS2? It's your first console ever and you've bought the best magazine to give the latest and most up-to-date information but don't have a clue what we're going on about? Well, without wanting to patronise those gamers who've been around since the Atari 2600 by spelling out the meaning of gaming terms and acronyms in the reviews and previews, here's your 'at a glance' guide to all things PS2 and technical.

Afterburn: An extra kick of power in flight sims.

AI: Artificial Intelligence.

Analogue: Re: Dual Shock 2. Registering degrees of input, as opposed to digital's on/off status.

Boards: Snowboarders or games featuring the alpine sport.

Coin-op: Coin-operated arcade videogames.

Cut-scene: Explanatory, non-playable scene in videogame (also 'FMV').

CPU: Central Processor Unit. Brains of PS2.

Dev kits: Programmable PS2s used by developers.

D-pad: Direction pad on PS2 controller.

Dual Shock controller: Controller for PSone.

Dual Shock 2: Controller designed for PS2 (with analogue).

ECTS: European Computer Trade Show.

E3: Electronic Entertainment Expo (US).

Frame rate: Number of images drawn per second in games. Higher frame rate = smoother animation.

FPS: First-Person Shooter (eg Quake III).

Hack 'n' slash: Refers to game (usually fantasy) featuring blade combat.

High res: High resolution (graphics).

HUD: Head Up Display.

Screen furniture such as map, speedometer, etc.

Iconography: Graphical shorthand defining game, genre etc.

Low res: Refers to poor quality graphics.

L3: Pressing down on the PS2 controller's left joystick.

Mini-games: Bonus, playable games found in larger titles.

Polygon: Building block of videogame graphics.

PSone: The precursor to PS2. If you don't know what this is then frankly there's no hope for you.

Real-time: When one second of game time equals one second in the real world.

RPG: Role-playing game.

RTS: Real-time strategy.

R3: Pressing down on the PS2 controller's right joystick.

Sim: Simulation.

Strafe: Move sideways while looking straight.

USB: Port to connect peripherals such as keyboard to PS2.

***If there's a term, word or phrase that's still taxing your brain cells, let us know and we'll include it here.**

007 NIGHTFIRE

★ OVERALL 08

Aside from the occasionally iffy AI, this has enough variety to make a solid single player game, and the multiplayer gives it longevity.

7 BLADES

OVERALL 06

Ninja-styled adventure with a 'healthy' dose of chop-socky gameplay.

18 WHEELER

OVERALL 06

Brash, chunky and colourful truck racer. Unfortunately it just doesn't offer enough substance to satisfy the hardened gamer.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP

OVERALL 07

The World Cup version of FIFA 2002 with more pizzazz, nifty effects for star players and a serious challenge at the highest difficulty level, but sadly lacking in game modes.

ACE COMBAT: DISTANT THUNDER

OVERALL 07

Best Ace Combat yet. A graphically-polished flight sim with a variety of missions. Best with a flight-stick of some kind.

AFL LIVE 2004

OVERALL 06

Plays a better game of footy, but it's not a vast improvement over its predecessor.

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

★ OVERALL 08

There's more than enough Inline action to keep you impressed and entertained until the next Tony Hawk says, 'Buy me, dude!'

AIRBLADE

★ OVERALL 08

Intricate visuals, sublime handling, massive ails – everything you could want hoverboarding to be. Back to the Future anyone?

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2002

OVERALL 07

An enjoyable all-round game of baseball with oodles of depth, and surprisingly compelling to watch as well as to play.

AMPLITUDE

★ OVERALL 08

An addictive mixture of reflexes and music timing. Weak graphics but great gameplay.

AQUA AQUA: WETRIX 2.0

OVERALL 07

Addictive, well-realised update of the N64 puzzler Wetrix. Essentially it's Tetris with water. Weird, but worthwhile.

ARC THE LAD: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

OVERALL 07

It isn't original but Arc the Lad is a welcome addition to the list of next-generation RPGs.

ARMORED CORE 2

OVERALL 07

Infinitely-tweakable first-person mech shooter. Not for the casual gamer after a quick fix, but perfect for those who love their sims.

ARMY MEN AIR ATTACK: BLADE'S REVENGE

OVERALL 02

Very dull helicopter game. Hardly surprising from arguably the worst series of games to grace a console.

ARMY MEN: GREEN ROGUE

OVERALL 01

On-rail shooter that manages to sink to new depths of soldiering tedium. Avoid at all costs.

ATV OFFROAD FURY 2

★ OVERALL 08

More of the same, with new tracks, riders, racing modes and plenty of good old fashioned fun.

AUTO MODELLISTA

★ OVERALL 08

The love-child of cel-shaded graphics and Gran Turismo. Despite its cartoony appearance, this is a fairly serious racing game.

BACKYARD WRESTLING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

OVERALL 06

When they titled this brawler Don't Try This At Home – did they mean the game?

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

★ OVERALL 08

Play D&D on a console! Quite simplistic and arcadey, but this is still a great RPG that adds nicely to the PS2's line up.

YOUR KEY TO SHORTLIST

GOLD

Only for games that scored the elusive 10/10.

SILVER

Awarded to games with a mighty 9/10.

BRONZE

Given to games that scored an impressive 8/10.

SMALLER TRACKS, FEWER CARS

Games you must play before the sequel ruins them. But be quick.



With Burnout 3 just being announced, we figured it was a good time to take a look at the original rubber burner. Back in 2001 GT3's success meant we also saw all sorts of rip offs racing onto shelves as well. Burnout was a fresh breath of petrol fumes in a stagnating genre. Rather than following the relentless realism of GT3, Burnout wasn't afraid to chuck the rule book out the window and toss racers into the middle of inner city carnage. Beating your opponent by mastering perfect racing lines is good but nudging your mate's car into an oncoming semi trailer, then crossing the finish line before his crumpled wreck lands is better.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

★ OVERALL 08

Compelling and original. It manages to cross multiple genres and is bizarre, unique and engaging all at once.

BLOODRAYNE

★ OVERALL 08

BloodRayne is an explosion of sex, action and violence. It's not going to tax your mind but it's so much fun you won't care.

BOMBERMAN KART

OVERALL 07

As much fun as four people can have with fifty bucks. It's worth it just for the original 2D Bomberman.

BUFFY 2: CHAOS BLOODS

OVERALL 07

Full of action and adventure, Chaos Bloods is a worthy addition to the Buffy legacy.

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

★ OVERALL 08

An even more intense racing experience than its predecessor. The Fast & the Furious in a video game.

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

★ OVERALL 09

Better whip and dungeon action than Larry Wachowski's last all-nighter at the Hellfire Club.

CLUB FOOTBALL

★ OVERALL 08

The second best soccer game on PS2. Superior to the FIFA games but PES still gives it a thrashing.

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 4

★ OVERALL 09

One for experts and newbies alike, Colin 4 is a superlative rally sim with a tank full of fun.

COMMANDOS 2

★ OVERALL 08

A daunting but extremely worthy and rewarding strategy game where the player controls a team of operatives in WWII missions.

CONFLICT DESERT STORM II

★ OVERALL 08

It's not perfect but it improves on its predecessor by a long shot. War may be hell but this certainly isn't.

CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER

OVERALL 07

A fantastic trip down memory lane for old school veterans, but Contra may confuse or confound the contemporary gamer.

CRASH NITRO KART

OVERALL 06

With a little spit and polish, CNK could have been in pole position, but its faults leave it lagging behind.

CRAZY TAXI

★ OVERALL 08

Arcade thrills aplenty in this no-holds-barred city-smashing racer. If you want speed, buy this now.

CRICKET 2004

OVERALL 07

Howzat? Not outstanding. Comes close to being great, but falls short due to the inherited flaws of Cricket 2002.

DANCING STAGE MEGAMIX

OVERALL 07

Top sweaty disco fun, marred by a flimsy selection of songs. All together now – big fish, little fish, cardboard box.

DARK CHRONICLE

★ OVERALL 09

If you've finished FFX and need a new fix, look no further. This is top-tier RPG fare, an essential purchase.

DEAD TO RIGHTS

OVERALL 07

Near endless gunplay with hand-to-hand scrapping, backed up with a dark tale. DTR is good, mindless fun.

DEF JAM VENDETTA

★ OVERALL 08

Some more options would have made this a true champion, but it's still a worthy contender. SmackDown watch out!

DEUS EX

★ OVERALL 09

The thinking man's action shooter and genre-busting game that redefines expectations. Superb.



DEVIL MAY CRY

★ OVERALL 09

Melding battling with lush surroundings and a superb gothic atmosphere. One of the best PS2 games yet? Definitely.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

DEVIL MAY CRY 2

★ OVERALL 08

Die-hards may cry at the new direction, but there's still enough gorgeous style and firearms in DM2 to satisfy action junkies.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DISNEY'S EXTREME SKATE ADVENTURE

★ OVERALL 08

Gene warfare and confusing puzzles abound in this bizarre manga adventure.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DOG'S LIFE

OVERALL 07

This canine caper is an inspired look at the adventure genre that will keep you more entertained than a dog four balls.

DRAGON'S LAIR

OVERALL 02

Unplayable retro adventure. Should have stayed firmly stuck on the Laser Disc where it belonged.

DROPSHIP: UNITED PEACE FORCE

★ OVERALL 08

Impressive combat sim that rewards commitment with paced and varied gameplay.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DYNASTY TACTICS 2

OVERALL 07

Dynasty Tactics 2 is purely one for the more masochistic strategy gurus. You know who you are.

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: XTREME LEGENDS

OVERALL 07

Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends is strictly one for the beat-'em-up fans. Just don't call it mindless.

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

OVERALL 07

Dynasty Warriors 4 is an accomplished title, but due to its lack of innovation, it's unlikely to get many pulses racing.

ENDGAME

★ OVERALL 09

Sets a new standard in the lightgun shooter genre: Innovative, refreshing and most of all, a tonne of fun.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

ENTER THE MATRIX

OVERALL 07

Despite a painful lack of depth ETM is an enjoyable package for anyone after another dose of Matrix mayhem.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

★ OVERALL 08

Adventure that includes smart visuals, witty script and intelligent puzzles.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

OVERALL 06

Other hockey sims on the market with better gameplay put this in the sin bin.

ESPN NBA BASKETBALL

★ OVERALL 08

ESPN NBA Basketball slam dunks the competition with its slick presentation and innovative modes.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

ESPN NFL FOOTBALL

★ OVERALL 09

If this game's quality was put into a local game, the results would be incredible. Until then, go for the stars and stripes.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

ESPN NHL HOCKEY

★ OVERALL 09

A fast flowing game with plenty of depth. A no-brainer for hockey fans but a still a solid game for everyone else.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES

OVERALL 07

EverQuest Online Adventures offers rewards for the persistent, but it can be a pretty tough slog getting there.

EVIL TWIN

OVERALL 05

Adventure from the dark side of platforming. Average, so-so animation with 76 levels of twisted plot.

EXTERMINATION

OVERALL 07

Alien-inspired survival horror-fest that is set in a deserted Antarctic research base. Positively crawling with cool design innovations.

EXTREME-G 3

★ OVERALL 08

A neon beast of a future bike racer that requires skill and brains. Takes some 'inspiration' from the Wipeout series.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

EYE TOY: PLAY

★ OVERALL 08

Forget the fact that it's marketed at casual gamers; give it a try, because when it comes to Eye Toy, seeing is believing.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

EYE TOY: GROOVE

OVERALL 06

Groove is a victim of the diversity of its predecessor. The lack of variety offered by this dancing title undoubtedly narrows its appeal.

F1 CAREER CHALLENGE

OVERALL 07

At last, an F1 game that makes a priority of excitement and thrills over worthy but dull simulation.

FANTAVISION

OVERALL 05

The world's first fireworks game. Not enormous, but of rare and random beauty.

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004

OVERALL 07

The best FIFA yet but it's miles behind PES3. It has all the bells and whistles, but the gameplay is still lacking.

FINAL FANTASY X

★ OVERALL 09

Nothing else needs to be said about this brilliant RPG. A classic Square adventure with next-gen presentation and production.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

FINAL FANTASY X-2

★ OVERALL 09

FFX-2 is a huge, sprawling RPG adventure that is well worth the attention of even the most casual fan.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

FORMULA ONE 2003

★ OVERALL 08

Another F1 corker! All the drivers, tracks and cars included. Load it up and feel the speed. Feel the need for speed.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

★ OVERALL 09

Slight imperfections are swamped by an utterly addictive and clever game experience. You must play this.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

FUTURAMA

OVERALL 06

With a bit more of polish this could have been shinier than Bender's metal ass.

FUR FIGHTERS

★ OVERALL 08

Cute fluffy creatures armed to the teeth with shotguns blast each other to pieces. The toy cupboard will never look innocent again.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GHOSTHUNTER

★ OVERALL 08

It doesn't quite live up to its (huge) potential but it's original, scary, exciting and well worth a look.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GHOST RECON

OVERALL 07

A squad-based first person shooter that suffers from a cumbersome interface for ordering troops about, often degenerating into arcade-style run-and-gun gaming.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

OVERALL 06

The Reaper might be cool, but loading times hamper this port of a complex PC battle game.

GITAROO MAN

★ OVERALL 08

If you have a PS2 collection, you should definitely have at least one game like this one in there! Check it out.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GLOBAL TOURING CHALLENGE: AFRICA

OVERALL 07

An impressive racer that is further lifted by clever use of interesting locations.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

★ OVERALL 10

Not quite as good as its neon-soaked, '80s prequel but it's still fantastic fun and can now be found for bargain prices.

GOLD
PlayStation 2

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

★ OVERALL 10

Better than GTA 3: Cars, crooks, coke, and chaos with total freedom to do what you want. A must have for any gamer, serious or not.

GOLD
PlayStation 2

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC

★ OVERALL 09

If you didn't know already, GT3 is the greatest racing game in the world. Speed down to the store and buy it now.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

GRAN TURISMO CONCEPT: 2002 TOKYO-GENEVA

★ OVERALL 08

A more accessible version of GT3, with concept cars. Perfect for those who just want to race, rather than play mechanic.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GREGORY HORROR SHOW

★ OVERALL 08

A truly ghoulish treat for fans of the survival horror genre who fancy something a little different.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GUMBALL 3000

OVERALL 03

A decidedly crap racing title that fails to deliver on all fronts. Not something to bother with considering how many other decent racers are about.

G-SURFERS

OVERALL 07

Futuristic racer that's improved by an innovative track editor.

GUILTY GEAR X

★ OVERALL 08

Pushes hard at beat-'em-up boundaries. The start of a new wave of next-gen 2D fighters.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GUNGRAVE

OVERALL 06

Bizarre Manga inspired shooting game with gorgeous visuals, but a distinct lack of depth to back up all that eye candy.

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

OVERALL 07

A mech shooter for robot obsessive-types everywhere.

TOP 5 BEST SHOOTERS



1. TIMESPLITTERS 2

Monkeys with machine guns and the best PS2 multiplayer mode is all you need.

2. MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

The action goes a little south after the incredible opening but a very fine shooter.

3. RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Tighter and more consistent gameplay than MOH but not half as exciting.

4. DEUS EX

The thinking man's shooter may be getting a little dated but it's still good fun.

5. RED FACTION 2

Opinion tends to be divided on this successful series. Some love the ability to smash through walls but others simply can't forgive the suspect AI.

HALF-LIFE

★ OVERALL 09

The award-winning PC first-person shooter/adventure arrives on PS2 in resplendent form. An essential purchase.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

★ OVERALL 08

Simple puzzles and gorgeous graphics make this a winner for younger fans of the books and films.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

OVERALL 07

Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup is an entertainingly original title, but lacking in variety and challenge.

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

★ OVERALL 09

A disturbingly realistic take on living the life of a hired killer. Not one for the squeamish, but it contains brilliant gaming.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

HUNTER: THE RECKONING WAYWARD

OVERALL 07

It lacks any real uniqueness but looks good and plays well enough to be forgiven.

INDIANA JONES & THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

OVERALL 07

High adventure 3D platform gaming let down by some unforgivable technical issues.

I-NINJA

OVERALL 07

While I-Ninja is packed with varied gameplay, its original elements are largely superfluous. Worth a rent though.

JAK II: RENEGADE

★ OVERALL 10

Darker and more challenging than its predecessor, Jak II is the best platform game we've ever seen!

GOLD
PlayStation 2

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

★ OVERALL 09

A brilliant platformer from the makers of Crash Bandicoot that introduces two heroes you'll be seeing a lot more of.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

★ OVERALL 08

Looks and plays just like the films. Maybe a little too Metal Gear Solid-Lite but it's perfect popcorn action.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH

★ OVERALL 08

A little lightweight but the multiplayer modes and arcade missions keep Dredd out of jail.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

JURASSIC PARK: PROJECT GENESIS

OVERALL 07

A prehistoric premise, sure. But Operation Genesis puts a fresh spin on the God sim genre. Hammond would be proud.

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO

OVERALL 06

A padded-out. Training mode makes up for this smart ninja fighter's otherwise rather limited nature.

KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER

★ OVERALL 08

A bit too similar to Tony Hawk for our liking, but still the best surfing game around.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

KILL SWITCH

OVERALL 07

As third-person shooters go, it's quite a lot of fun. Just don't go in expecting the next Splinter Cell.

KINGDOM HEARTS

★ OVERALL 08

A beautifully produced RPG with Disney and Square characters. Don't let the kiddie vibe fool you, this one's very tough.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

★ OVERALL 08

Cute and cheerful platformer featuring the lovable glove-eared blue cat-rabbit hybrid. Fun stuff.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

OVERALL 06

A more-than-competent boxing sim. Not a match for Rocky though.

KVA: DARK LINEAGE

OVERALL 07

A well-rounded platforming experience. Missing a few bells and whistles but very respectable fun.

LARGO WINCH

OVERALL 05

Based on a French comic character, this spy game is too linear, and lacks the interactivity that is needed to maintain a gamer's attention.

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

★ OVERALL 08

Legacy of Kain: Defiance is a fitting new chapter. Huge, bloody and pretty. Get ready to spill some blood.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

OVERALL 05

'Violent ballet' with a shortage of modes and options. There are much better recreations of Pro wrestling.

LE MANS 24 HOURS

★ OVERALL 08

Accessible for gamers daunted by sim-style vehicle handling, but has depth and thrills.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2



LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

Meaty button-mashing for the masses. Movie-to-game licenses are almost never this good. And it's a two-player game.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

MACE GRIFFIN: BOUNTY HUNTER

A hype-free, classy intermesh of different styles makes for one of the most compelling games of the year.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MADDEN NFL 2004

Not just for those who already love padding-up, this is a great game, whatever your tastes.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

MANHUNT

Manhunt is a solid, enjoyable stealth-'em-up with utterly engaging gameplay. Not one for the kiddies, however.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

Whilst impressive in many areas and exceptional in some, MHPB2 doesn't quite live up to expectations.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

Horrendously long loading times and jerkiness spoil some of the best shootouts gaming has to offer.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MAXIMO VS ARMY OF ZIN

Much more accessible than its prequel, with an even more engaging plot.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

A game? A movie? MOH is a gruelling experience that packs the best of both worlds.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM

If you love blowing stuff up then this will do more than whet your appetite for destruction.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

A must-own, state-of-the-art tactical espionage game that's reason enough to buy a PS2. A superbly paced, gripping story.

GOLD
PlayStation 2

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

Incredibly comprehensive Metal Gear package for newbies but MGS2 owners will struggle to find \$110's worth.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MICROMACHINES

Nothing particularly 'next-gen' about this instalment of the series, but an excellent racing diversion nonetheless.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - OPERATION SURMA

Captures the stealthy stuff perfectly but ignores the other MI staples - car chases and hot chicks!

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

MONSTERS, INC.

Disney Platform game, based on the film. Initially amusing but sloppy and basic with a lifespan of no more than a few hours, though the film clips are entertaining.

OVERALL 04

MOTO GP

Gron Turismo on two wheels? A fantastic motorbike sim that rewards repeated play.

OVERALL 07

MOTO GP2

A refreshing bike racer. Slightly repetitive gameplay and a shallow multiplayer, but slick, fast and realistic. Excellent 3D graphics and race replay facility.

OVERALL 07

MOTO GP3

A little repetitive and far too similar to the last two games. Still, it's the best motorbike game on the system thus far.

OVERALL 07

MUSIC 3000

A mightily authoritative music title, which works as a fun diversion or a serious tool. Unmissable for wannabe bedroom artists.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

MX SUPERFLY 2003: FEAT RICKY CARMICHAEL

Polished and engaging motocross sim that utilises its subject matter to great effect. An excellent extreme game.

OVERALL 07

MX RIDER

Motocross/supercross sim that lacks the true grittiness and excitement of the sport.

OVERALL 06

NBA 2K3

Not only realistic, but packed with plenty of features as well, offering a wide selection of game modes.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

NBA HOOPZ

Instant arcade-styled basketball sim, but there are better ones on the street.

OVERALL 06

NBA STREET VOLUME 2

A must-own for hoop fans and anyone looking for a solid multiplayer title.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2

A must-own for hoop fans and anyone looking for a solid multiplayer title.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

Sexy, in A1 nick, goes like a greased rat up a drain pipe, ground shaking stereo, no previous owners. It's a steal.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

NFL 2K3

This is the game to own for anyone into American football thanks to its ultra-realistic graphics and gameplay.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB

American football game that has unique features, but unable to compete with Madden 2003.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

NHL 2K3

Excellent simulation settings for the die-hard fans, and plenty of arcade thrills for the rest of us.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

NHL 2004

PS2's finest NHL romp. You'll enjoy this even if you think Wayne Gretzky is some kind of Polish Soup.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

NY RACE

Average future taxi racer, based on the opening sequence of Luc Besson's sci-fi epic *The Fifth Element*. Nothing crazy to see here.

OVERALL 05

ONI

New character animation in an enjoyable 3rd person sci-fi romp.

OVERALL 07

ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

Impressive survival horror that lets the PlayStation 2 run riot. Does suffer from an itty PAL conversion, though.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

OPERATION WINBACK

Lacks variety, but still an enjoyable stealth shooter, nevertheless.

OVERALL 06

ORPHEN

A disappointing anime-inspired Japanese RPG.

OVERALL 04

PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2

Rhythm action game from Japan in which you play a rapping dog. Simple but compelling gameplay. Short life span and only really worth revisiting for nostalgia.

OVERALL 07

PARIS-DAKAR RALLY

Based on the race of the same name, this sim does little to inspire interest.

OVERALL 05

PENNY RACERS

A half-baked and underfed GT3, with just a few good tracks, it's a difficult one to recommend to anybody wanting a great racer.

OVERALL 04

POLICE 24/7

Basic cop-shot light gun game with motion capture option. Frantic and fast but lacks structure and individuality. Just another on-rails shoot-'em-up.

OVERALL 05

PRIDE FC

The new king of the ring! Pride FC is the most realistic fighting simulation available on any system to date. Great stuff.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME

Prince? More like the King. Ubi Soft has crafted one of the greatest PS2 adventure titles yet!

SILVER
PlayStation 2

PRISONER OF WAR

Escaping from POW camps is all well and good, but you remain a prisoner of often rigid game objectives. Even so, this is a bold, compelling adventure game.

OVERALL 07

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

If you know who Kewell is you must own this. The best soccer, sports and multiplayer game on your PS2.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

PROJECT EDEN

Look beyond some not-great visuals and you'll lose weeks to this complex and satisfying first-person shooter/adventure.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

QUAKE III

In four-player, this FPS is solid multiplayer fun. A technical tour de force, it runs smoothly and looks absolutely gorgeous.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

RATCHET & CLANK

Pure platforming bliss from the company behind the original *Spyro the Dragon* titles on the PSone.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

RATCHET & CLANK 2: LOCKED AND LOADED

Everything you could want in a sequel. It plays brilliantly and though it lacks innovation it's still a real charmer.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC

Rayman offers plenty of 'armless fun but he's no match for Ratchets or Raccoons.

OVERALL 07

READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2

A marvellous, arcade-based comedy boxing game, pitting ridiculous cartoon fighters against each other.

OVERALL 07

RED FACTION

Ace first-person shooter that melds MGS-style tactics and the all-out blasting of the hallowed *Quake III*.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X

A captivating story, cinematic atmosphere, kinetic action, frights, thrills and copious amounts of blood-letting.

OVERALL 09

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Only the high standards of the FPS competition prevent this from being a truly essential buy.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

REZ

Exploring the relationship between sound and colour this techno shooter provides pure gameplay. Unique, and refreshing.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

RIDGE RACER V

A popular racer, but high hopes were scuppered by the limited size and a lack of originality.

OVERALL 07

RING OF RED

A mech RTS that's fun? Oh yes. A must-buy for the discerning robo-fetishist after something different.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

A cel-shaded shooter that brings the classic anime to life, but is held back by a decidedly clunky control system.

OVERALL 07

ROCKY

The best boxing title available for PS2. Has a great story mode that takes the player through the movies.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

RUGBY 2004

Covers the entirety of the sport well but fails to capture the true feel of it.

OVERALL 07

RUGBY LEAGUE

An entertaining game which neglected NRL fans can finally enjoy. Long-awaited, but very satisfying!

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

RUN LIKE HELL

A refreshing sci-fi survival horror title with a host of famous names handling the voice acting.

OVERALL 07

RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY ADVENTURE

This would make a fine and worthy addition to any action fan's game collection. Brevity is the only pain.

OVERALL 07

SALT LAKE 2002

Soulless Winter Olympics game. Decent weather effects but the majority of events are rather tedious.

OVERALL 03

SHADOW OF MEMORIES

Filmic adventure that keeps the surprises coming with a serpentine plot.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

SHINOBI

Shinobi is the kind of frantic, shallow, old school arcade game we don't see enough of anymore. A fast and bloody good time.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

SILENT HILL 2

One of the most atmospheric and genuinely frightening titles on PS2. Like all of your worst nightmares rolled in to one game.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

SILENT HILL 3

The nastiest game on PlayStation 2 - we dare you to play it!

SILVER
PlayStation 2

SILENT SCOPE 2

A worthwhile update of this arcade sniper sim, though the formula is looking tired now.

OVERALL 07

SILPHEED: THE LOST PLANET

Tedious top-down shooter. No-one bought a PS2 for games like this.

OVERALL 03

SIR ALEX FERGUSON'S PLAYER MANAGER 2002

Adept looty management sim, but lacks the killer goal.

OVERALL 06

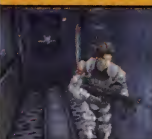
SKY ODYSSEY

A flight sim where you don't have to shoot anything. Just complete crazy missions.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

STILL THE ONE

Ancient games that can still make your head spin



EXTERMINATION

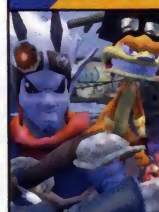
With *The Thing* still frighteningly fresh in our memories, why not dust off another frosty take on alien invasion. Developed by Deep Space, *Extermination* was marked down to 7/10 for sticking so closely to the genre staples, playing it too safe. But, with hindsight, it's a remarkably solid effort. Yes, the voice acting is utterly rubbish but it is survival horror - what did you expect? The game's polar setting is also perfect for creating tension. Enemy design is satisfyingly cohesive, the plot rattles along nicely and the ability to aim in first-person is genuinely innovative for the time. Fans of the genre will surely lap this up like rabid alien dogs. *Extermination* also works perfectly as a tasty light meal before gorging yourself on the feast of horror that is *Silent Hill 3*.



SLED STORM	★ OVERALL 06
A maxed-out, splashy remake of the PSone racing classic, very much in the SSX mould.	
SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT	OVERALL 07
Deep & stylish this game suffers from disproportionate leaps in difficulty that can be off-putting.	
SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORIES	OVERALL 07
Impressively big, fast and frantic, but not much different to its predecessor.	
SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS	★ OVERALL 08
Engrossing tactical action, with excellent online play, but if you haven't got broadband you won't fully appreciate it.	
SONIC HEROES	OVERALL 07
Sonic Heroes is a solid platformer that pays homage to its classic routes but the ol' hedgehog has failed to evolve...	
SOUL CAILBUR 2	★ OVERALL 10
Finely crafted gameplay, stunning visuals and a high level of polish make SCII an essential purchase.	
SPIDER-MAN	OVERALL 07
It doesn't display huge innovations over its PSone counterpart, although it's a solid and enjoyable Spidey title either way.	
SPY HUNTER	★ OVERALL 08
Pretend to be James Bond. Captures the spirit of the original game and adds further shiny next-gen knobs.	
SSX 3	★ OVERALL 09
Delivers an avalanche of adrenalin rushing action, unlike any other snowboarding title out there.	
STARSKY & HUTCH	OVERALL 07
Given the lack of gameplay variety this cop caper shouldn't be as consistently enjoyable as it is.	
STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER	OVERALL 07
Gorgeous to look at, taking the gamer into the Star Wars universe, but is let down by repetitive gameplay.	
STAR WARS: CLONE WARS	OVERALL 07
One for the Star Wars collectors, and a great battlefield in its own right. Shallow but still worth investigation.	
STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER	★ OVERALL 09
Mesmerising 3D Star Wars blaster with engaging missions and film-perfect sound effects. Great fun.	
STAR WARS: SUPER BOMBARD RACING	OVERALL 05
Banal cartoon kart racer. The Force is weak with this one.	
STATE OF EMERGENCY	OVERALL 06
A shallow but worryingly enjoyable game that puts the player at the centre of a riot.	
STREET FIGHTER EX3	OVERALL 06
A decent enough 2D/3D fighting game, but is milking the series to death. There are better 2D fighters from the same company.	
STREET HOOPS	OVERALL 06
More about collecting fancy duds than having a decent game of basketball, which is why this hoops title misses from the line.	
STUNTMAN	★ OVERALL 08
Won't have the wide appeal of the Driver games due to its difficulty, but it's an ingenious concept that thrills and entertains.	
SUMMER HEAT BEACH VOLLEYBALL	OVERALL 07
The best crack at beach volleyball we've seen, but nothing to really set your gaming soul on fire.	
SUMMONER 2	★ OVERALL 08
Follow-up to the RPG launch title. More action orientated than the original, but still an epic adventure for fans of fantasy.	
SUPERCAR STREET CHALLENGE	OVERALL 04
A by-the-book arcade racing game round desolate cities. Nothing to recommend it.	
SWORD OF THE SAMURAI	OVERALL 07
Sword of the Samurai is a slow, ponderous, but intelligent game that combines strategy with gore.	
TARZAN FREERIDE	OVERALL 04
Based on a Disney film of the same name, this tries to be different with 'surfing' tree branches, but it doesn't work.	

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT	★ OVERALL 08
Fantastically playable and graphically spectacular beat-'em-up. The tagging moves make it a worthwhile purchase.	
TEKKEN 4	★ OVERALL 09
Continuing the tradition of fighting game excellence. The first Tekken game to include free-movement.	
TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN	★ OVERALL 08
An infusion of ninja style and killer gameplay across nine sumptuous levels. A great return to form for a classic title.	
TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES	OVERALL 06
Like Arnie, this game is a likeable dinosaur. Big guns and explosions but last-generation gameplay.	
THE GETAWAY	★ OVERALL 09
Sony's answer to Grand Theft Auto, with a decidedly darker and nastier storyline. Offers an amazingly life-like replica of London.	
THE HOBBIT	OVERALL 07
The Hobbit is a game devoid of challenge and originality, and strictly for the younger Tolkien fans.	
THE HULK	OVERALL 07
Not a smash-hit; but not damaged goods either. An enjoyable beat 'em' up; shame about those stealth sections though.	
THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN	★ OVERALL 08
Combine the show's best elements with the best of GTA and you've got an instant, charming winner.	
THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE	OVERALL 06
It's Crazy Taxi but with Bart and Homer behind the wheel.	
THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT	★ OVERALL 08
Bustin' Out is slicker than the last game but without enough gameplay enhancements to make it essential.	
THE THING	★ OVERALL 08
Not only does it do justice to the classic horror film, but also introduces fear and trust issues to the survival-horror genre.	
THE WEAKEST LINK	OVERALL 04
You'll get more enjoyment playing along with the show than you will from putting up with the viper-tongued host.	
THEME PARK WORLD	OVERALL 07
Take on the role of a theme park tycoon for a day in this engaging god sim, where pleasing the crowds and getting those turnstiles a-spinning is your prime directive.	
THIS IS FOOTBALL 2003	OVERALL 07
Has an excellent one-two passing system and is a solid football title, but it still plays in the shadow of Pro Evolution 2 and FIFA 2003.	
THUNDERHAWK: OPERATION PHOENIX	OVERALL 07
A brave attempt to blend arcade and sim with choppers.	
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004	★ OVERALL 08
The best golf game on PS2, but we're holding our breath for next year's online version.	
TIME CRISIS 3	★ OVERALL 08
Action-packed arcade bullet-fest with plenty of lure for the casual player. Very similar to Time Crisis 2 though.	
TIMESPLITTERS	★ OVERALL 09
Fun, fast, frantic and inventive first-person shooter. Buy it for the addictive split-screen multiplayer madness.	
TIMESPLITTERS 2	★ OVERALL 10
Takes the multiplayer from TimeSplitters and adds heaps of options. Major visual upgrades, i-Link for 16-player games - the works!	
TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL	★ OVERALL 10
Move over Snake, Sam's the new special agent in town! Splinter Cell is an innovative game with some very cool touches.	
TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS	★ OVERALL 08
A little on the slow side but there's no doubting Lara's appeal. The original superstar is back!	
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4	★ OVERALL 10
With some new moves, the series is taken in a new direction. Skate around, interact with locals and do things at your own pace.	
TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND	★ OVERALL 09
Neversoft has turned the Hawk series into a Vice City-style adventure. And they've lost none of the charm doing it.	

TOP 5 BEST SEQUELS



1. JAK II: RENEGADE

The first Jak was good but this game was an explosion of platforming brilliance!

2. GTA: VICE CITY

A tough-as-nails crime game, stuffed in a Hawaiian shirt. It's also our favourite PS2 game. Ever.

3. NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

Faster and more furious than 2 Fast, 2 Furious? You better believe it.

4. PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME

This game is so tough it'll put hair on your chest. The way they used to be.

5. FINAL FANTASY X-2

Not something we'd all admit to playing, but a great game nonetheless.

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA	★ OVERALL 08
A solid shooter that takes GTA's ideas and improves many of them, but loses something along the way.	
TUROK: EVOLUTION	OVERALL 06
Boasts a wicked line-up of weapons and a variety of gaming styles, but suffers from crappy AI and frame rate issues.	
TWIN CALIBER	OVERALL 03
One of the shoddiest shooters around. Takes an interesting twin-pistol gaming concept and ruins it with slow gameplay, chronic control issues.	
TWISTED METAL: BLACK	★ OVERALL 08
This is everything that you'd expect a Twisted Metal game to be on PS2 - and then some.	
UNLIMITED SAGA	OVERALL 07
If you've never played a Sogo game, this will be unfamiliar and unspectacular but very challenging.	
UNREAL TOURNAMENT	★ OVERALL 08
Totally over-the-top first-person shooter. Makes for a nice alternative to Quake III, but is outclassed totally by TimesSplitters 2.	
URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER	OVERALL 07
UFS is not worth pulling your shirt over your head for, but given a chance it's worth a run.	
V-RALLY 3	★ OVERALL 08
Not as instantly playable as WRC II Extreme or Colin McRae Rally 3 but effort pays off with some very satisfying racing.	
V8 SUPERCAR RACE DRIVER	★ OVERALL 09
Real damage. Real V8s. Real Aussie tracks. Real fun. The best racing game seen so far on the PlayStation 2!	
VICTORIOUS BOXERS	OVERALL 04
Offbeat Japanese boxing title that lacks the killer punch. Pointless to track down while games such as Rocky are about.	
VAMPIRE NIGHT	★ OVERALL 08
A vampire-blasting light gun extravaganza that looks great but has questionable replay value once the bad boys are all put to rest.	
VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION	★ OVERALL 08
Packed with things to do, VF4 still lacks the outright fun that makes Soul Calibur a game for everyone.	
VIRTUA TENNIS 2	★ OVERALL 08
Far and away the best Tennis simulation to grace the PS2. The World Circuit mode provides an awesome long term challenge.	
WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED	★ OVERALL 08
It may be a little wet behind the ears but Unleashed has just as many thrills as its extreme brothers.	
WAR OF THE MONSTERS	OVERALL 07
War of the Monsters is a big, brash game that explodes with charm and burns brightly... but not for very long.	
WARHAMMER 40,000: FIRE WARRIOR	OVERALL 07
A decent FPS with good controls and an interesting story but it doesn't bring anything new to the tabletop.	
WHIPLASH	OVERALL 07
A great sense of humour and warped characters save Whiplash from obscurity as a platformer.	
WIPEOUT FUSION	★ OVERALL 09
Style and substance are here in the most fully realised Wipeout yet. This future racer is as smart and extreme as it gets.	
WORMS 3D	OVERALL 07
Drooling Worms fanatics - you know who you are - will grab this in a flash but anyone who drinks their tequila without the little wriggly guys will want to wait for Worms 3D 2.	
WRC 3	★ OVERALL 09
An improvement over its esteemed predecessor, WRC 3 races neck and neck with McRoe 04 for rally glory.	
WWE SMACKDOWN! 'HERE COMES THE PAIN'	★ OVERALL 09
The best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever shall be... until the next SmackDown!	
XIII	★ OVERALL 09
XIII takes the creaky old FPS and adds fresh style to make it a very worthy purchase.	
X-MEN 2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE	★ OVERALL 08
A quality action adventure that blends stealth with hand-to-hand combat. Only a few irritations deny it a higher score.	

CRASH AND BURN

STRAP YOURSELF IN BECAUSE EA'S HANDING US THE KEYS TO THE MOST INTENSE RACER EVER, *BURNOUT 3*. WORLD EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON VERDICT NEXT MONTH!

NEXT MONTH
IN OFFICIAL
AUSTRALIAN
PLAYSTATION 2
MAGAZINE

STARCRAFT: GHOST

SNEAKIER THAN SOLID SNAKE? TOUGHER THAN JIN KAZUYA? SEXIER THAN LARA CROFT? WE'LL DELIVER THE OFFICIAL VERDICT NEXT MONTH IN OUR MASSIVE PREVIEW!

SPLINTER CELL 2

STARCRAFT ISN'T GOING TO HAVE AN EASY TIME TRYING TO STEAL THE STEALTH THRONE! SAM'S BACK FOR THE MONSTER MULTIPLAYER SEQUEL AND WE'LL BE REVIEWING IT RIGHT HERE!

RISE TO HONOR

HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO ACT HIS WAY OUT OF A PAPER BAG BUT JET LI SURE PACKS A PUNCH IN HIS BONE-CRUNCHING PS2 BEAT-'EM-UP! READ THE OFFICIAL REVIEW NEXT ISSUE!

8 BRAND NEW PS2 DEMOS...

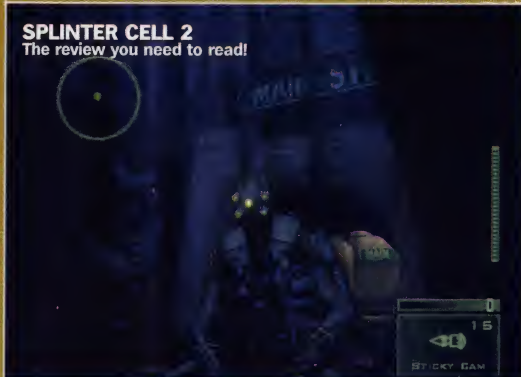


AUSTRALIA'S ONLY PLAYABLE DEMO DVD. NEXT MONTH OUR DISC WILL BE PACKED WITH THE LATEST PLAYABLE DEMOS, INCLUDING JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING, RAINBOW SIX 3, CRASH NITRO KART AND MORE! NO OTHER MAGAZINE PACKS SO MUCH VALUE ONTO ONE DEMO DISC!

STARCRAFT: GHOST
New details revealed!



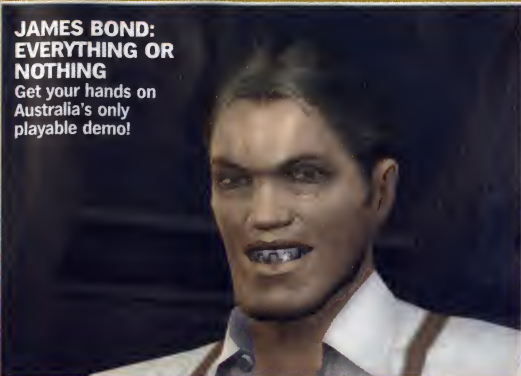
SPLINTER CELL 2
The review you need to read!



RISE TO HONOR
We wrestle with Sony's surprise brawler!



JAMES BOND:
EVERYTHING OR
NOTHING
Get your hands on
Australia's only
playable demo!





WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

THE SECOND TO LAST THING
THAT'LL GO THROUGH YOUR MIND



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PlayStation 2

KILL SWITCH



TO BE THE BEST, YOU'VE GOT TO BEAT THE BEST

UNDERESTIMATE THIS ENEMY AT YOUR PERIL. THEY WILL WORK AS A UNIT TO TAKE YOU DOWN. FORTUNATELY, YOU HAVE TWO NEW COMBAT TECHNIQUES TO DEFEND YOURSELF WITH. THE 'OFFENSIVE COVER SYSTEM' ALLOWS YOU TO SHAPE YOUR BODY TO THE ENVIRONMENT, GIVING YOU VITAL PROTECTION. USING 'BLINDFIRE' YOU CAN LAY DOWN SUPPRESSING FIRE WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR COVER POSITION. UNFORTUNATELY, SO CAN THE ENEMY.

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Utilize powerful telekinetic abilities to hurl enemies into objects, impale them on sharp objects, or throw them off ledges.



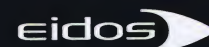
Engage in thrilling combo moves using physical agility, telekinesis, and the formidable Reaver blade to destroy hordes of human and undead foes.



As Kain or Raziel, feed your dark hunger by sucking the blood and devouring the souls of enemies to survive.



PlayStation 2



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